PARADISE RESTORED:

OR

A Testimony to the Doctrine

OFTHE

BLESSED MILLENNIUM:

WITH

Some Confiderations on its approaching Advent from the Signs of the Times.

To which is added.

A Short Defence of the MYSTICAL WRITERS, against a late Work, intitled, The Doctrine of Grace, or the Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit vindicated, &c.

Bleffed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: On such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. Rev. xx. 6.

Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, with respect of persons. James ii. 1.

Non homines, nec humanas doctrinas, sed Deum & disciplinam à Deo traditam consectandam mihi esse statuo. Just. Martyr. Dial. cum Tryph.

By THOMAS HARTLEY, A. M.

Rector of WINWICK in NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

LONDON:

Printed for M. RICHARDSON, in Pater-noster-row M DCC LXIV.

1764



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To the Right Honourable

Lady FRANCES SHIRLEY.

MADAM,

S the doctrine of Christ's temporal reign with his faints on earth has, in a manner, been long loft in the Church, fo his spiritual reign in his faints has been much opposed, either openly or covertly; by which means many are left without any faith as to our bleffed Lord's having, or to have a kingdom in this world, either spiritual or temporal. The design of the following work, here presented to your Ladyship, is to defend our Saviour's royal prerogative in both these branches of his fovereignty from plain Scriptures; and if I have not fucceeded, the defect is in the writer, and not in

any want of sufficient proof to support the subject.

Both these doctrines are of great, though not of equal importance; nay, the one is fundamental, for he that denies the reign of Christ spiritual in the hearts of his subjects, knoweth nothing yet rightly of Christianity, as he ought to know. Reason, human learning, and the religion of nature, have certainly been exalted far above their proper place, by a fort of advocates for revealed religion, in these last times; and this is one chief cause of that increase of infidelity amongst us, so much to be lamented. Witnesses to the spirituality of the gospel-dispensation have appeared in every age of the Church, but were never more ridiculed and shamefully treated than in this, under the names of Enthusiasts, Fanatics and Mystics: And therefore it is high time to rife up in defence of venerable truths and venerable characters, against oppofers of whatever denomination; to rescue the holy mysteries of religion from contempt; and to distinguish between doctrines facred in themselves, and those errors that have been joined with them.

Something of zeal in this cause will appear in the following volume, and also much of moderation in matters of leffer concernment: But so it happens, that as zeal is fure to procure us enemies, so moderation is not likely to gain us friends; for even the religious go by parties as well as other people; and not to be with one fide in all things, is the way to be in favour with no fide: Thus impartiality is taxed as well as most other things, but then it carries that evidence of its honesty and truth along with it, without which we should scarcely know it to be a virtue.

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The doctrine of the bleffed Millennium, by what appears to me, is on its way towards a speedy revival in the Church, not fo much by any progress that

as by certain strong impressions on the minds of many serious persons at this time, attended with a full persuasion of its near approach. I must own, Madam, that I am in the same belief, and tho' this affords no argument towards convincing others, yet it will be allowed a sufficient motive with me, for urging the proofs and consideration of it in the best manner I was able. This office of love and duty I owed to my brethren, and my sense of the obligation carried in it the force of a divine command.

The following work is addressed to your Ladyship, in token of the author's great respect and esteem, and also as a testimony of his gratitude for many instances of your favourable regard: But I am sensible, that more belongs to public addresses of this kind than the acknowledgment of private obligations; there should also be something praise-worthy in the person addressed,

dressed, to hold out for imitation: And here I find myself happily justified in this choice, as it presents me both with an example and a theme.

The duty of beneficence on Chriftian principles (which is the true gofpel charity, both in its root and fruit) is confessedly of divine obligation upon all, according to their means and power; and therefore the great and wealthy are more largely concerned therein than others. Nor will the want of a gospel-faith be any excuse for want of beneficence, seeing though all pretend not to faith, yet all pretend to humanity, and this by the very law of our nature obliges to beneficence; and he whose bowels cannot teach him this, has less of true pretensions to humanity than he is yet aware of.

The rich and honourable owe tenderness, help and protection, to their inferiors; and these stand indebted to them again in all dutiful returns of lov-

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ing respect and obedience: But the former take too much upon them, when they challenge all from the latter as a debt due merely to their superior worldly advantages and distinctions, which are often accidental, and often without any peculiar excellency in those that possess them: In this case they will frequently be disappointed; and here the relative duties will be at a stand: For it is according to an ordinance of God, both in the kingdom of Nature and of Grace, that the less should first be bleffed of the greater, that fo all things may begin and go on well. streams descending from the upper fprings, enrich the plains below, and cause the valleys to rejoice and fing, whilst these send up again in vapours the drops that water the hills, to yield a fresh supply for their bounty. like manner, condescending love, with its genuine fruits of kindness, flowing from persons in exalted stations on those that are beneath them, is returned with affectionate prayers and fervices of grateful

grateful duty from them to their benefactors; and thus a circulation of bleffings is continued.

It is this beneficence, Madam, on Christian principles, that gives true dignity to nobility, and it is much to be wished, that they went together oftner than they do: However they meet in your Ladyship; and may this example of your Christian faith thus evidencing itself by Christian kindness, bring much glory to God by its diffusive influence! And the good Lord increase you in every virtue and every grace, and crown all with that constant humility which gives him the praise of all the good he worketh in us, and allows no part of it to ourselves!

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Though in all the conversation I have had with your Ladyship on the subject of the Millennium, I never could perceive that I gained much ground towards making you a convert to the belief of it, (though what is here

here put together in better frame may have a better effect) yet I can truly fay, that I ever found in my honourable friend a patient hearer of what I had to offer upon it, and one never stiff in conference to maintain or oppose any doctrine which does not affect the effentials of Christianity. It would be well, if there was more of the like moderation in persons of a religious character; conversation would then be not only more easy and pleasant, but also more edifying than it often is, nor would run so much into dispute and a painful kind of discipline. There are few matters of mere opinion that are worth sharply contending for: Besides, earnestness of altercation agitates the spirits too violently; and if it does not take away fomething from charity, of which there is danger, yet it feldom fails to banish good humour, which is no contemptible vehicle of truth, and does not a little contribute towards procuring it a more favourable acceptance.

As it is my fincere wish that a doctrine fo big with important truths, and full of practical motives, as that of Christ's millennial kingdom, may now recover its loft ground in the Church; fo if the following view of it prove in any degree useful to this end, I shall think the leifure I am fallen into, so far well employed, a leifure however not to be envied me, as it is in fo great a measure occasioned by the increasing infarmities of a tender constitution in the declining part of life, by which I find myself much unfitted for the difcharge of public offices; fo that I may now confider myself as become a kind of out-pensioner to the Church, upon the small accruing profits of a living, which I may be allowed, in present circumstances, to wish exchanged for the more suitable provision of a Sine Cure; but these things, Madam, you well know, go not by wishing, nor always by fuitableness: However, I do assure your Ladyship, that it is not my defign to be altogether useless, for I abhor I abhor idleness; and therefore, as invalids, who are not fit for a march, or for engaging in the open field, may yet be serviceable in garrison, or keeping watch; so if upon a sharp lookout I should chance to spy some sly interloper crept into the Church, vending his wares of false doctrine, or otherwise busily employed in undermining any article of our faith; tho' I might not be strong enough to seize and bring the offender to justice, I may at least be sufficient to give the alarm, and fo contribute to the common fafety, as well as more able men. Thus the skilful commander, though he cannot make all his men fit for the fame employment, can find employment fit for all his men: And fo King David appointed the two hundred that could not follow him to the battle, to tarry by the stuff or baggage; nor were they to fare the worse for that; for notwithstanding the murmurings of their fellows, he made it an ordinance

in *Ifrael*, that all fuch should come in for an equal dividend in the spoil (a); and I am far from thinking that this was written without a mystical meaning.

The refemblance betwixt the prefent state of religion and the art of war does but too well justify the foregoing comparison. Divinity has long been confidered only as a field of battle for the masters of science to engage in, and where the ablest disputers and critics are supposed to have always gained the victory; and yet the war is not ended; nor does the Church feem to have advanced one step farther in the way of unity or piety; which shews that argument and controverly are not fuch decifive weapons to procure a good peace, as is generally supposed; and he knows little of polemical divinity who is to be told, that an ingenious

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⁽a) I Sam. xxx.

reasoner will never be at a loss for something to say on any side of the question. It will therefore be our truest wisdom to change our weapons from carnal to spiritual; for it is not the disputing head, but the devout heart that makes the Christian.

In the love of God is that peace of God which passeth all understanding; and in this bond of peace is the unity of the Spirit; nay, after all that the wise critic and disputer of this world can have to say; the way to divine knowlege lies only through divine love; and he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love (a). Here, Madam, is a short and sure way pointed out to us by the best authority, and a way that is unperplexed with intricacy and debate: It is my sincere prayer to Almighty God, that he will be our strength to keep us in it, till we meet

⁽a) 1 John iv. 8.

in the glorious kingdom of Jesus Christ, to whose love I most heartily commend you, and remain, with unseigned respect,

Your Ladyship's

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Humble servant,

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THOMAS HARTLEY.

in the glorious kingdom of Jelus Chrish, to whole love I most heartily commend you, and remain, with unfeigned refrect,

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CHRIST's

Glorious REIGN on EARTH with his SAINTS.

CHAP. I.

The great Importance of this Doctrine considered in Several Particulars, in connexion with Scripture proofs.

Scriptures, whether it be generally received by the Church or not, demands our attentive and ferious regard to the evidence offered in its behalf, in proportion to the weight and importance of the subject: Now to the Doctrine before us belongs this claim in a degree of the highest eminence, there being nothing on this side heaven more weighty and important than the nature of that kingdom it holds forth, and man's interest in it; a kingdom of perfect righteousness, peace and love * on earth, wherein God shall dwell with men †, and be their unspeakable blessedness and glory.

^{*} If. ch. xi. and lx. + Rev. xxi. 3.

How this great and concerning truth, fo defireable in itself, and full of comfort; typifyed by fo many of the L'evitical institutes *; particularly foretold and described in numberless places by the inspired prophets; made the subject of so many precious promises in the Gospel; delineated, circumstanced, and its exact duration given us in the Revelation of St. John; and received as an apostolical Doctrine by the primitive Christians, according to the testimony of several of the most antient Fathers: I say, how this great verity of Religion came to dye away in the Christian Church, and to lye buried in the grave of oblivion for about twelve centuries +, is more to be lamented than easy to account for, (though fomething will be offered on this head in the fequel:) however we shall be justifyed in faying, That the grand enemy and deceiver of fouls would not be wanting, according to his power, to darken or suppress any prophecies that should foretell his shame, and the downfall of his kingdom upon earth, foon to be translated in renewed glory underthe absolute sovereignty of a Prince of that human race whose happiness he ever beheld and

The Ch. of home is a principal agent opposed in this business to maintain the Triumph of Papat Power to the Thing he is question in the Vision of the Thing to the Reader him (1) when the principal of the Reader him (1) when the Thing to was a transfer and

^{*} For a full and fatisfactory explication of these in reference to the millennial state, see in particular a treatise intitled, A Spiritual Voice to the Christian Church, and to the fews: by the Rev. Mr. Clarke, sold by J. Townsend, in Fleet-street.

⁺ From the time of St. Austin to that of the Reformation little or no mention is made of this Doctrine by ecclesiastical writers.

opposed with a jealous hatred *: Now as this grand Crifis of the Christian Church is more particularly predicted and described in the Apocalypse, or book styled The Revelation of John the Divine, he doubtless would use all his influence and devices, to bring discredit on this part of the facred Canon; and, whether this happened through diabolical or human malice, certain it is, that the defign too well fucceeded for a time, and that the Afiatic Churches were fo far feduced by the spirit of error as to reject its divine authority: But it was not the will of God, that this inestimable treasure of prophecy and mystic knowledge should be lost to his Church, and therefore his good providence watched over it for preservation, and has transmitted it down to us in all its venerable obscurity, as that hidden mystery that should be made manifest to his faints in due time.

* As it is highly credible that Satan, whilst an angel of light, was a fountain spirit, and hierarch in the place of this world; so we may hence the more naturally account for his particular envy and enmity to mankind, the designed successors to his kingdom; as also for that share of government and dominion he still retains in the evil principle, till the time of his binding shall come as prince of the power of the air working in the disobedient: And however lightly the power of evil spirits may be thought of in this unbelieving age, sure it is, that the Apostle accounts our danger and opposition from this quarter, as a most considerable part of our Christian warfare: "For we wrestle not against shesh and blood, (only) but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Epbes. vi. 12.

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As few, even among ferious and well-difposed Christians, have ever applyed themselves to consider the antiquity of this Doctrine, and the authority on which it rests; or have met with any encouragement from that course of reading and instruction to which they have been accustomed, to make the search (the Scriptures relating to this subject having been all explained away to another fense by the several Churches in Christendom, now for many ages) this being fo, we have the less cause to wonder at the little fuccess that has attended the labours of some excellent persons, who have endeavoured to revive this precious truth amongst us; and also the more reason to expect, that every fresh offer of it will meet with many prejudices to encounter, before it forces its way to a general reception: In our present state of weakness and dimness, prejudices will cleave to the best men, and in the well-meaning prejudices are to be allowed for with tenderness; these however, in the matter before us, may admit of great abatement, if the ferious enquirer will prepare his mind for the admission of evidence, by confidering the great importance of this subject under the following particulars.

And first, the belief of paradise to be restored on earth, by a renovation of the glories of this material creation, gives more extensive honour to the adorable character of the Saviour of the world, by ascribing to his work of redemption demption the same scope and fullness that belonged to this fystem of creation, and to the loss it suffered by the fall of man, and the curse that ensued: And accordingly, (as if on purpose to engage a more than ordinary attention to the promise of such comprehensive power and goodness) we are told in the Apocalyptic Vision, Rev. xxi. That He that fat upon the throne, faid, Behold, I make all things new: And he said unto me, Write, for these words are true and faithful. And indeed, though we had had nothing more than some few scattered and obscure hints in Scripture relating to this gracious purpose, it would have been natural to make the most of them, and to strengthen so comfortable a hope by every warrantable supposition: It would have been natural to suppose, that he who is there distinguished by the glorious and benevolent character of The repairer of the breach, and the restorer of paths to dwell in, Is. lviii. would repair that breach in nature which fin and the curse have made, according to its fullest dimensions; nor leave one single path, now deformed and desolate, unrestored to paradifiacal beauty.

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The whole redemption of man, as to the executive part, we well know, is not yet fully accomplished, though in its process towards it: We groan, says the apostle, within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body: Now redemption implies restoration, but of what other body than that beauty

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of holiness which was the covering of the divine image in unfallen Adam, in the room of which fin has cloath'd us with this garment of shame, these filthy rags of mortality and corruption: And not only we, but the whole creation, fays he, groaneth and travelleth in pain .- It waits in earnest expectation for the manifestation of the sons of God .- It shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Rom. viii. The apostle argues from parity of reason, that if created nature became subject to vanity through the fin of man, and loft the harmony, beauty and perfection of its powers and properties thereby, it must also have its share with him in restoration, and again be blessed together with the author of its curse; nay, he ascribes to it a kind of sensibility of suffering, till that time come, in the laborious struggle and painful working of its feveral tendencies, operations and instincts, after the manner of liquors in fermentation, to defecate itself of its present heterogeneous mixtures and contracted impurities, in order to recover its primitive clarity and glory. Let not the minute philofopher with his microscope in his hand, and strutting in the pride of his fancied sufficiency, smile disdainfully at this doctrine as a figment of the imagination, feeing all nature in her prefent disorder of agonizing throws and convulfions, the distemperature and inclemency of climes and feafons, and all the superinduced malignity of her influences, bear witness to this truth. Let not him, I fay, who yet could

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never pierce half through the outward rind of Nature thus depraved and spoiled, dare to pronounce from fallen reason concerning her primæval excellencies, or her capacities for redemption: if he cannot by a light fo feeble discover the latent fire in a flint, till forced from its dark cell by the violence of percussion, how shall he descend into the depth beneath, develope the thick coverings which now conceal the richest treasures of nature from mortal fight, and entering into her reclusest center (though in a grain of fand) furvey the heavenly powers in their present inactivity and seeming death, though ready to fart into obedience at the command of the Almighty, to diffuse their healing influence throughout the distempered constitution of our created system, to harmonize all its discordant measures, and to tincture every property of matter, as heretofore in paradise, with celestial virtue.

But here it must be noted, that how much soever of impersection, desect and punishment have been introduced through the Fall into outward nature, to render this world a place of painful penance and pilgrimage, for our disobedience, and to answer many good purposes in the way of our recovery; yet it also must be confessed with grateful praise to the Father of mercies, that He hath not punished us according to the measure of our transgression, nor left himself without abundant witness, in any part of created nature, of his eternal power and Godhead; but constantly displays B 4

his wisdom and goodness, in the wonders that he doth for the children of men. Man defired to know good and evil, and he has his choice; of good enough to teach him from how much greater good he is fallen; and of evil a fufficient measure indeed to humble him for his folly and his fault, and to turn him to God to fue for pardon and deliverance: So that they are without excuse, whom neither fuch goodness nor fuch severity can lead to repentance: But here lies the greatest evil of all, that man by his false reasonings and vain amusements studies all he can to reconcile himself to his present condition of existence, without looking backward from whence he came, or forward to whither he is going, alike ignorant of the mifery of his horrible fall, and of the glories of proffered redemption, and fo may be compared to a creeping worm of the earth, that contents itself with knowing or defiring little more than the clod it crawls upon, a stupidity, reproved by the prophet, as exceeding that of the very brute beafts: " The Ox knoweth his owner, and the Ass his master's crib, but Ifrael doth not know, my people doth not confider," If. i.

It is highly natural for man, let him fay what he will, to wish for a state of perfect happiness in this world, as his ideas, wants and sensations here, are chiefly conversant with and accommodated to the blessings of God in nature, but in its present constitution such felicity is absolutely unattainable, by reason of the

the manifold diforders within and without him, which occasion disappointment, vexation and fuffering at every turn and from every quarter: But if it has pleased the Almighty Father, through the mediation of his Son Christ Jesus the Lord, to promise to his redeemed ones such a state of bliss on earth, to be effected by a renovating change passing on body, foul and spirit, and also on the whole material creation; if he has graciously decreed to conduct us from Paradife loft through Paradife restored, to that inheritance which is eternal in the heavens, thus changing us from glory to glory, it is certainly of high importance to know our interest in so rich a mercy; nay were the truth of it as doubtful as it is evident, we should be better employed in entertaining it with a pleafing hope, than in studying to form objections to it, especially as it clashes with no article of Christian faith, but invigorates the whole system of it; and is moreover fo far from implying any delay or diminution of supreme happiness to the Saints *; that it allows a large increase of their joy before the fixt time appointed of the Father, for the final confummation of all things, and therefore may be confidered not as heaven delayed, but as heaven begun on earth.

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^{*} It appears from many plain Scriptures, that the fouls of them that dye in the Lord are not immediately translated to supreme bliss, but into the invisible state of Paradise, doubtless at times doubly blessed with occasional manifestations of the All-glorious Redeemer. See in particular, Acts ii. 34. and Heb. xi. 40.

Secondly, this Doctrine of Paradise to be restored in the Millennial reign of Christ with his Saints on earth, carries in it no small degree of importance, as it points to the accomplishment of God's designs in creating man as his image and reprefentative in the kingdom of temporal nature, fitly constituted and every way furnished for his compleat happiness; and to ferve as a theatre of the Divine wonders, in which the heavenly physical powers should work in and through external nature, and bless it in every part of its constitution, according to its original model, when all was very good. Here Adam in the time of his innocency stood as a great Prince and Vice-gerent of God, with a Divine intellect, and a body of unspeakable beauty; he ruled in all the powers of glorified nature, and all the creatures were subject to him: But ceafing to co-operate with God in a free furrender of his will, and a refigned dependence upon his Maker, taking the government of himself into his own hands, and forming in himself a separate will and defire to know evil as well as good, contrary to the law of his Creator, he thereby broke off his communication with the fountain of his power and blifs, fell into the evil he had chosen, and into all the impotence and misery of a creature feparated from the love and government of its Creator. The grand enemy had now eafy access to him, an evil spirit entered into him, and Paradife withdrew: In this withdrawing of the bleffing was the curse, and in this fall of Adam from his participation of the Divine nature

nature (for he was a Son of God) lyes the necessity of our redemption and restoration by Jesus Christ, God-man.

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The common prevailing ignorance of the nature of this fall, or of original fin, is the deplorable root of infidelity in Deifts, and the blindness, sin and shame of professing Christendom in general. Whilst men only understand it as an overt act of transgressing a positive law in our first parents, by eating the forbidden fruit, and imputed to all their posterity with fuch an appendent train of dreadful consequences, no wonder that their notion of our redemption rises no higher than to that of an imputed righteousness; no wonder, that the rational Deift stumbles, as stumble he may, at fuch a representation of God as appears to him falling short of the goodness and justice of a man: But when on the other hand, it is confidered as the loss of, or death to, a holy and heavenly nature, which the first man could now no longer communicate to his posterity, . but must be derived both to him and them from another bleffed fountain, in the way of regeneration, that, as in Adam all died, even so in Christ should all be made alive *: In this view of the subject, whatever difficulties may arise from the mysterious nature of it, in the way of our comprehension, yet hereby all apparent objection to the Divine goodness is totally removed.

^{*} I Cor. xv. 22.

How long Adam kept his first estate of innocence, is not told us: Some believe, that he stood not forty days, supposing that period of time appointed for his tryal, before he should be confirmed in blifs, and that therefore the fecond Adam, who was to be the repairer of his and our lofs, should also pass through a temptation of forty days in our fallen nature, to gain that victory over the Tempter, which the former had lost: But however, that might be, it appears highly credible, that neither the malice of the grand seducer, nor the sin of our first parents, should by any means be effectual to make finally void the purpose of God in creating fo glorious a system for the happy abode of a new race of Beings, little inferior to the angels, and ordained to the manifestation and praise of his power and goodness. But how were the gracious designs of this beautiful Creation answered, if Evil so soon found its way to mar the works of God, and to make what before was very good no better than good and evil beyond all hope of recovery: If fuch a last farewell to Paradise so soon took place, even whilst the first human pair had enjoyed the bleffings of outward nature for fo short a time, and before they had feen any hopes of iffue to share and increase their happiness, then might we truly fay with respect to temporal good, that the curse is stronger than the bleffing, and that judgment hath triumphed over mercy.

But though Adam, through the abuse of his liberty and disobedience, was the cause of that sad

fad change in nature from which proceed mortality and corruption, and the many evils inseparable from our present miserable condition in this life, yet when we confider this only as a chastisement for sin, till the time for the restitution of all things shall come; a period of probation, wherein many fons and daughters shall be born unto God, and brought unto glory, through the regenerating power and quickning spirit of the second Adam, who, when he hath accomplished the number of his elect, shall hasten the return of the blessed kingdom, disappeared, but not destroyed, now forfeited, but then restored: In this view of things, which is the scriptural one, God's purpose as to creation flands firm and unfrustrated, nay proceeding to fuller manifestations of the divine philanthropy, as the display of his wisdom, power and goodness in renewed nature will be augmented by the triumphs of his mercy in our redemption: And therefore if the fons of the morning (the heavenly hierarchs) are faid to have fung together, and all the fons of God (the whole coelestial host) to have shouted for joy, * on the Almighty's laying the foundations of the earth; how far more jubilant will be the joint praises of men and angels, how much louder the shoutings of Grace, Grace +! when the redeemed from among men, as the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb, shall appear with the King of glory to take possession of the promised inhe-

^{*} Job x xxviii. 7. + Zech. iv.

ritance; and when the holy harpers shall sing their new song before the Lamb that was slain, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, And we shall reign on the earth *."

That general prevailing notion, that neither the constitution of Adam's body, nor of this world's system suffered any considerable change by the fall, is not a harmless mistake, but a dangerous error, and very hurtful in its confequences, as it leads men to think unworthily of God, whose every work is perfect, and to ascribe those defects to the Creator which took their beginning from the fault of the creature. Adam, as he flood in the image of God, was the great wonder and mystery of created nature, containing all its highest powers and perfections, both intellectual and material, in himself: With a glance he penetrated through all the specifick qualities, and differences of the vegetable and animal creation, and when it is faid, that he gave names to the latter, we are not to understand thereby that he only appointed certain arbitrary articulate founds, whereby they should be nominated, but that he distinguished them by such appellatives, as in the language of nature, now loft, expressed

^{*} Rev. v. 9.

the feveral properties of their natures, for Adam had doubtless an intuitive knowledge of all things within the sphere of his kingdom, and was not left to the painful refearches, and flow procedure of the human understanding in its present state, for the discovery of truth, reason (however excellent in its proper use and province) being rather an argument of our fall than of our perfection, in as much as its chief employment confifts in feeking after or fearching out fomething that we have loft, or not yet found, especially, if we take in the perplexity of its operations, the uncertainty of its conclufions, and the great difagreement in the judgment of mankind on the most important sub-Nor will it admit of question, whether his body in its kind was as perfect as his intellect before the fall; but on the contrary, highly credible it is, that it was agile, luminous and beautiful, beyond our conception, and far furpaffing the fum total of perfection in all vifible nature: Nor should this be thought too much to fay of it, as it is reasonable to affirm, that to him, for whose sake and happiness all other things were made, must have belonged superior excellence in every part: And indeed the belief of ætherial lucid vehicles, or a kind of heavenly coverings provided for the fouls of good and pious men, is no new Doctrine in the Church; nay some of the more enlightened fages of heathen antiquity, especially among the Platonists, feem to have been no strangers to the truth of what the apostle speaks of under the names of coelectial and spiritual bodies

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bodies, and of which we have a remarkable proof in the examples of Moses and Elias appearing in glory (glorified bodies) converfing with our Lord at his transfiguration on the mount, doubtless representing not only what should be the case of man restored, but also what was the case of man unfallen. And this is not without its weight against that vain figment; that the foul is incapable of thinking or acting without fuch organized bodies as we now carry about us, though in truth, these gross distempered carriages appear much more apt to clog and impede, than to facilitate its operations, according to that affirmation of the wife man: " The corruptible body preffeth down the foul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth on many things *." Dr. Henry More, that wonder of his age, and who faw far beyond all systems of modern Divinity. speaking of the fallen angels, delivers himself as follows: " This their rebellion had an effect upon their vehicles, and changed their pure ætherial bodies into such as were gross and fæculent: They have forfeited their more resplendent mansions for this obscure and caliginous. air they now wander in, and have in their polluted vehicles less of heaven than the meanest regenerate foul that dwells in these tabernacles of earth, fo that what the prophet fays, is most true of them; that their fun is gone down at mid-day. (Mrst. of Godliness, B. ii. ch. 4.)

^{*} Wifd. ix.

The dominion which God is faid to have given to Adam over all the works of his hands, elements, and all creatures, denotes the high perfection of his original nature; and the loss of that dominion is one among a thouland other proofs of his deplorable fall, the far greater part of the creatures, nay, all more or less, being inobedient, rebellious or injurious to man at present. To suppose that, during his state of fovereignty and perfection, the fire could burn him, the water drown him, or the earth resist him, is to believe that he was subject to them, and also that they had the same noxious properties before as after the curse: As well may we suppose from a servile adherence to the letter contrary to the tenor of the Scripture, that Eden was like a common garden, and that Adam used a spade to dig with. This fupremacy of man over the creatures, we are affured, shall be restored to him with all the other privileges and powers of his primæval dignity, and all things be again brought under his dominion, when the creatures now subjected, through the fin of man, to the evil of vanity and enmity, (though unwillingly, and groaning for deliverance) shall be freed from this bondage of corruption, and there shall be no more hurting or destroying in God's holy mountain * (the new Jerusalem state) but all shall be safety and innocence, as it is represented by the evangelical prophet +, under the images and perhaps real truth, of the Leopard and Lamb

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^{*} Pfalm viii.

⁺ If. ch. xi and lxii.

lying down together, the child leading the young lyon and calf, and playing on the hole of the asp, &c. It shall only be added here under this particular, that among other examples in holy writ, we have an earnest of this subjection of the creatures to man, in Elijah's being fed by ravens at the brook Cherith, and in the piece of money brought to Peter by the fish, at the command of the second Adam, ordained head and king of the human race in nature restored and glorifyed: And as to man's power over the elements (though suspended in this our present deplorable state of fin and mifery) it is particularly exemplified in Elijah's ascent through the air; in Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's escaping unhurt in the fiery furnace, and in our Lord's walking on the waters.

The nature of miracles is greatly mistaken, even by the learned in general, through a flavish attachment to their systems of false philofophy, nor do they feem to be in any disposition to lay aside their prejudices even for a moment, that so they may emerge from their error; otherwise, the theosophic writings of Jacob Behmen, and other authors of this class, however obscure they may appear at first, would not be so loaded with the reproach of Enthufiasm, nor would they go on to speak evil of things which they at prefent know not, and resolve not to know. All true miracles are indeed the work of God, but this through the mediation of the heavenly physical powers residing

refiding in the Divine Body in his Saints, as truly as the raising of weight is by the instrumentality of the earthly mechanical powers: And therefore our Lord fays, on healing of the Syrophænician woman, I perceive that virtue is gone out of me; and thus handkerchiefs and aprons carryed from the body of Paul, nay the shadow of Peter passing by, cured diseases in many. Through the mysterious operations of this heavenly body, (once manifested at the transfiguration) our Saviour, as man, could govern and controul all the powers of nature at his pleasure, as he did on many occasions, for the powers of every created system are subject to those of a superior system, as the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the greatest in the earthly or planetary kingdom. This divine cloathing or inward and spiritual body was not always in act, as, to the effect of an outward miraculous manifestation, even in the Saints, nay fometimes it depended upon the faith of others for the free exertion of its power, and therefore our Lord himself was restrained from doing many mighty works, because of unbelief; and the Disciples were not able on a certain time to cast out a devil, as Jesus told them, because of their own unbelief: But the power of working miracles, being only for the use of others, is not absolutely necessary or esfential to it; it may only be an adjunct or occasional manifestation of it, and therefore the want of this power is no argument against the reality or growth of that, without which miracles are not wrought. St. Paul distinguishes this heavenly

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heavenly vehicle from the earthly tabernacle by the names of God's building, or his bouse from beaven; and those words, " * Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day," are thus expounded by the learned Dr. H. More, viz. " Though his earthly body were in a perishing and decaying condition, yet his spiritual and heavenly got strength, and flourished every day more and more +. It is no groundless belief, (however exploded by the fashionable infidelity of our days) that to the operations of fuch a heavenly principle in man, as the body here mentioned, are to be ascribed many extraordinary things above the human powers of nature related by authors of good credit to have been done by persons of eminent piety, both as to healing and other ways. The attestation of Fathers of the Church to the body of Polycarp continuing unburnt in the fire, and to St. John's coming out of the veffel of boiling oil unhurt, are well known, though not even the two last facts are allowed credible by our own modern writers of ecclefiastical history: But Bayle, Le Clerc, Van Dale, Middleton, and authors of that class have worked up Incredulity into a system, and the age in general has adopted it, fo that to reject the authority and speak contemptibly of the earliest Fathers of the Church, and to jest upon the best attested miracles since the times of the apostles, is no longer deem-

^{* 2} Cor. iv. 16. + Myst. of Godlines, ch. 7.

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Upon the knowledge of this Doctrine of a heavenly body in the Saints hangs the discovery of great and important mysteries both in grace and nature, however little able we may be at present, through our ignorance of the laws of the spiritual world, to account for the limited exercise of its powers, hidden properties, occasional administrations, &c. or to anfwer all the objections that an inventive reason may frame against it. The difficulty that attends our conceptions of many things that are the objects of our fenses, is not allowed to be any just objection to their reality; and if our ignorance stands confessed as touching the most obvious productions of nature, a like ignorance in things of a higher sphere should not be urged against the truth of them where we have any good degree of authority for its support: The latent fire in a flint, the effence of a fragrant beautiful flower concealed in a dry deformed root, and the powers of magnetism and electricity in bodies are proofs of this kind, and might be adduced to good purpose of illustration on the present subject, if it were to be professedly treated of; but perhaps enough, and more than was defigned, has been faid upon it in this place, and therefore I shall conclude this head with the following remark.

In the 28th ch. of Exekiel, where the prophet tauntingly reproves the oftentatious wealth

and grandeur of the king of Tyrus, (type of modern commercial Babel in particular, and of all in general, that pride themselves in the pomp and splendor of this world's riches) we have an allusive description of Adam's exalted state in paradife: His consummate wisdom and beauty is declared; the perfections of his body represented by the covering of cherubic glory adorned with gems; the harmonious working and play of his inward powers compared to the melody of musical instruments; and the glories of Paradife imaged to us under the beauty and lustre of precious stones; Thou jealest up the sum, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty: Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God: every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx and the jasper, and saphire, the emerald and the carbuncle, and gold: The workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created: Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth, and I have fet thee fo: Thou wast upon the holy mountain of God: Thou bast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire (radiant lustre.) His fall and degradation are then declared. Thou hast sinned; therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of Ged; (degrade thee from thy spiritual dignity and exalted state) and I will defroy thee, O covering cherub, (will deprive thee of thy glorious angelical body) &c. He that does not fee a mystical allusion to Adam in paradife under the literal expression in this and many other parts of this prophet's writings, lofes

loses much of the spirit of them, and is a greater stranger to their genuine mystical character than even the incredulous Jews, who at least owned it, though with derision, faying, Ab! Lord God, doth he not speak parables? The scriptures, like the roll given to Ezekiel, are a book written within and without, in which the historical fact is often related only for the fake of the mystical meaning, as the spirit of the Lord shall give it, not to the curious and fanciful, but to the humble, refigned and devout mind, for to the latter only the Lord revealeth his fecrets. Letter and spirit, like man and wife, should go hand in hand together, but false learning and false criticism have passed a divorce betwixt them; and by a fad perversion of the Scriptures, have figured away the letter, where the literal acceptation should be retained; and on the other hand, used the letter as a sword, to take away the life of the text, where the true fense is altogether spiritual or mystical.

In the true belief of the primæval glories of man's estate in innocence, to be restored by the blessed Redeemer in renewed nature, that dissicult question \$\Pi_{\text{obs}} \tau_{\text{obs}} \tau_{\text{obs}} \text{obs}\$, which has puzzled the acutest philosophers in every age, receives its solution; since by this dostrine the origin of natural evil is accounted for, the uses of its continuance for many moral purposes explained, and a final period to its existence in this world assigned; and so the axe laid to the root of sceptical reasoning in this matter: And indeed among believers, who acknowledge

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not this particular, important truth, they find themselves obliged to quit the side of reason for that of a refigned faith, in order to reconcile themselves to this dark ænigma of God's providence. Well then might the great Roman naturalist*, upon considering how all things seem made for the fake of man, and yet how man is subject to greater weakness and misery than most other creatures, make it a doubt, An natura parens melior bomini, an tristior noverca fuerit; Whether nature should be considered as a kind indulgent parent to the human race, or not rather as a cruel step-mother. Upon the manner of Pliny's handling this subject, the learned Dr. Jackson + raises the following remark: " Here I can rather wish than pray, " that this man had lived in this age, to en-" counter those Semi-christians (Pelagians and "Socinians) which contend for the fovereignty " of recta ratio (right reason as they call it), as " if it were the only guide or rule of christi-" an' faith." And indeed would these Semichristians, as the Dr. calls them, take an impartial view of the human nature, from its first to its last stage, we cannot see how they can be satisfied with their own reasonings upon the fubject, or believe that man in his present condition was the creature which God made upright, and modelled after his own image: Sure it is, that a wretched helpless infant, without covering or defence against the meanest rep-

^{*} See Pliny's Proæmium to the 7th B. of his Nat. Hist. + Vol. iii. p. 2.

tile, standing in need of being cleaned, swaddled and sed by another, promises ill for such a representative: The weakness and sollies of childhood advance not the similitude, nor do the properties and pursuits of youth help on the matter: And as to all man's courses, works and wisdom in his most perfect state, that have respect only to time, they are accounted by Solomon * no better than vanity and vexation of spirit;

* Solomon, in his Proverbs and elsewhere, speaks of a twofold wisdom of very different sources and characters, which are not fufficiently diftinguished by the generality of readers: By the one he means no more than natural knowledge, or the improvements of reason for the discovery of things on earth; which, though valuable in its kind, yet he calleth a fore travail, and faith of it: In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth forrow, (Eccles. 1.) denoting hereby the hard labour of attaining to it, as also the disappointments that arise from the shortness and defects of it. To the other (Divine wifdom) he affigns a heavenly original, and speaks of her in the character of a Divine person, and the companion of God; and Fob calls true understanding, or the understanding of spiritual truth, The inspiration of the Almighty, (ch. xxxii. 8.) Solomon gives her the preference among all things most desireable, and represents her as uttering these words: Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord, (Prov. viii.) Which is not the case as to the other wisdom, which oftentimes men of little or no religion posfess in great abundance: accordingly he connects true wisdom with the fear of the Lord, and excludes the wicked from all share in her treasures, as being laid up only for the righteous; agreeing to which Doctrine are those words in the book of Wisdom, spoken of Divine wisdom: " She " is the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence " flowing from the glory of the Almighty; therefore can no defiled thing fall into her. In all ages entering into holy fouls, the maketh them friends of God and pro-" phets."

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spirit; thus far then there can be no similitude or image of God; and we need not add any thing on the decay and infirmities of his nature in old age which finish his period with difgrace: So that as neither mankind, nor this created world, through the evil introduced into both by the fall, have as yet answered their end of bringing glory to God, according to that measure of obedience, happiness and perfection whereunto they were appointed in a state of temporal existence, there must come a time for the accomplishment of this defign, (that God's purpose may not be frustrated) when n:an shall be restored to the primitive excellencies of his nature, exercise dominion over the creatures, and be bleffed in body, foul and spirit; and when this once perfect System shall again exhibit a glorious display of the divine wonders for the praise of the great Creator and the happiness of his Saints, prophetically de-

of phets." (Wifd. vii.) This note shall conclude with that apposite remark of the excellent Mr. John Smith, in his Select Discourses, p. 2. "They are not always best skilled in divinity that are most studyed in those pandects which it is fometimes digested into; or that have erected the greatest monopolies of art and science: He that is most practical in Divine things, hath the purest and fincerest knowledge of them, and not he that is most dogmatical. Divinity is a true efflux from the eternal light, which, like the fun beams, does not only enlighten, but heat and enliven; and therefore our Saviour hath in his Beatitudes connected purity of heart with the beatific vision." As I may have farther occasion to quote this author as one of the most excellent sons of our church, for piety and sound learning, I refer for his character to his funeral fermon preached by Bishop Patrick.

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clared (Rev. xi.) by the founding of the feventh Angel, as affording matter of joy to all the heavenly host, who shall then proclaim with triumphant shouts of thanksgiving and praise: " The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ,"

Thirdly, this doctrine of Christ's glorious reign with his Saints on earth, and so bringing the government of it under the administration of a divine theocracy, may in a qualified fense be confidered as a temporary reparation of the injuries, and cruel treatment which his afflicted fervants have fuffered from their wicked oppreffors and perfecutors, and may help to reconcile them the better to those sharp tryals in their Christian warfare which they here endure through the injustice and malice of men, and encourage them to imitate the faith and patience of the Saints under the like or greater fufferings, knowing that this their short affliction in the cause of God and his Christ, shall be crowned with an eternal weight of glory begun even in time: Not that we are to infer from hence in favour of the doctrine of supposed merits, for man considered as a sinner has nothing to plead before God but guilty; is at best but an unprofitable servant; and in his most afflicted state it is required of him, that he justify God, and confess that his punishment is less than his iniquities have deserved: And yet to man as redeemed, pardoned and restored to the Divine favour, are many precious promifes given, both as to things spiritual and temporal,

temporal, which Almighty God has condescended to bind himself to the performance of as much as if man had a natural claim to them, and to style his own free gift an obligation of justice: Thus he is faid, upon our repentance and confession of sin, to be faithful and just, to forgive us our fins and to cleanse us from all unrighteoufness, that is, faithful to his promise by a just performance of it. And as to the injuries that are done to his fervants, he is fo far from approving of them that he expressly forbids them: " Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," and hath moreover declared, that he will avenge the cause of his elect, and the blood of his Saints, for that he who toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye *. Though God is no man's debtor any farther than he calls and condescends to make himself so, yet every man is a debtor to his brother in all the relative duties of justice and kindness, more especially to the righteous, as he is styled more excellent than his neighbour, and therefore entitled to a double portion of love and honour: But has not the contrary of this been the case with them from righteous Abel down to the present time; and as it was heretofore that he who was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, so it is now +, infomuch that the prosperity and great power of the ungodly, and the sufferings of the righteous even for righteousness sake, have been the great stumbling block and rock of

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offence to the good in all ages, to which purpose are so many expostulations in Scripture on this subject *, till the authors of these complaints were silenced † by views of the Messiah's glorious kingdom on earth, when oppression should cease, the righteous flourish, and peace should abound so long as the moon endureth; a plain prophecy of which happy day, is given us in the 72d Psalm, which nothing but violence and salse criticism can distort to any other meaning.

The external glorious state of the Church described in the 1xth ch. of Isaiab, is mistakenly applied by most of our expositors to the first advent of the Messiah, though it so plainly points to his fecond coming to reign over his bleffed converts, both Jewish and Gentile scattered over the face of the whole earth, when all kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall do him service; and therefore to apply this description of his happy blessed reign to his fuffering, persecuted state, or to any period of the church fince, is to treat the language of Scripture with a kind of mockery, as we know from the unquestionable testimony of all ecclefiaftical history, that truth and the true spiritual worship have hitherto been almost ever on the persecuted side, and that tribulation and the diffrace of the cross, as foretold by our Lord, have been the portion of his closest followers; how then have the days of their mourning been ended (ver. 20.) It is faid in that chap-

^{*} Jer. xii. 1. Job xxi. 7. † Pf. lxxiii.

ter (ver. 5.) that The abundance of the sea should be converted unto Christ, and the forces of the Gentiles should come unto him, doubtless to denote the univerfal extent of his Church, and the triumphs of his Truth; but which at prefent has the greater share in the Gentile world, Christ or Mahomet? and as to professing Christendom, which has had the longest, and which has now the larger fway, Popery or Protestantism? But to what has this small part of the Gentile world been converted? to greater righteous and truth in all good living? It is to be feared, that some among the unconverted heathen nations will in this respect shame us upon the comparison: how then is that prediction as yet fulfilled amongst us: Thy people shall be all righteous, (ver. 21.) Or have they been converted to higher degrees of brotherly love and a more pacific disposition; for it is said, (ver. 18.) Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting or destruction within thy borders: But how will this agree with the hatred, perfecutions and bloody wars fo notorious amongst us? And how shall an ambitious, worldly-minded and contentious Christendom style itself, The branch of the Lord's planting, the work of his hands, that he may be glorified? (ver. 21.) May it not then be asked, If this is that glorious kingdom that should come, or if we may not look for another? Three things are here to be noted; first, that the misapplying and wresting plain abounding prophecies relating to Christ's future kingdom, to a state whereunto they cannot belong, is both a stum-

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a stumbling block to Christians, and also affords matter for derifion to the unbelieving Jew against our holy religion. Secondly, that prevailing fondness for visibility and matters of outward observation in the Church, is the cause why most over-look the choicest of her members, fuch as worship the Father in spirit and in truth, men and women mortified to the world, fcattered through all the outward churches, but either little known or much despised, and in their present state signified by the figure of the woman hid in the wilderness: And thirdly, this error is helped on by that dangerous mistake of affigning the indulgences and donations of the worldly powers for marks of the church's true glory and welfare, though these have been the accidental cause of her disgrace and degeneracy, according to the following remark of the acute Dr. More *. " I must confess, says he, that the Divine Life as communicable to the Church, has been very much under hatches, fince Christianity and political interest went hand in hand; and that when honours and outward advantages were added to the Church, the Gospel net drew up more mud and dirt than good fishes."

In the prophecy of the fore-mentioned chapter, God Almighty is represented as crowning the fidelity of his fervants and their patience in tribulation, as with other temporal bleffings, fo also by reducing their enemies to a state of

^{*} Myst. of Godliness, p. 116.

homage and subjection under them, in reparation for their injuries and infulted honour: Thus fpeaking of his Church, he fays, " The fons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee, and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet, and they shall call thee the city of the Lord, the Zion of the holy one of Israel: Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations." But if the Lord thus tenderly refents the injured honour of his faints, how full a reparation must be made to the indignities and sufferings of the man, Christ Jesus? Nor is it enough to say, that this is already done in heaven, for that is not the place of justice, but bodily wrongs of a temporal kind must have a reparation fuited to their nature, that every measure of justice may be adequate and full, and God difplay his righteousness in every kingdom of his creation, for he is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works; but how could this hold true of his ways and works in this temporal world, were justice not to take place herein? and therefore even unprejudiced reason must subscribe to this Doctrine of fullness of reparation and fatisfaction to be made to the human nature of Christ in this world, and that his tears must needs be wiped away here, his poverty be made rich, his humility exalted; that where he unjustly suffered he must reign; and that where he was crucified, there he must needs be glorified, according to that prediction

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of Jeremiah *, Behold the days come, faith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth: In bis days Judah shall be faved, and Ifrael shall dwell safely: And this is the name whereby be shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGH-TEOUSNESS. Nor was this Sovereignty to be established over the Jews only, but likewife over the Gentiles: For is he the God of the Yews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? And therefore, " He should have the Heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession." Isaiah, who is so full of Christ's glorious reign on earth, (though this part of his prophecy is now fo generally explained away into metaphor) delivers the will of God concerning the Messiab thus ‡: It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my salvation unto the end of the earth. And the prophet tells us in the next verse, that this promise was given to him whom man despiseth, whom the nation (of the Jews) abborreth, to a fervant of rulers: But that in recompence for this his abject fuffering state at his first appearing, he should receive double of honour at his fecond glorious Advent, for that then Kings should see him and rife up, and princes should worship before him: And that this would come to pass when he

^{*} Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. + Rom. iii. 29. ‡ If. xlix.

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should be given for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth. Let any one read this chapter with due attention, and fay if the prophecy therein relating to the twofold state of Christ on earth, and to the gathering of Jews and Gentiles to the end of the earth, under the bleffed reign of the Redeemer, has ever yet been fulfilled, Bleffed Jesus! How long shall the precious promises of thy glorious reign continue as a book fealed or explained away? Among many reasons which evince, that this royal fovereignty in the person of Christ is not to be understood of his supereminent dignity in the highest heavens, after the final refurrection, it is plain also from hence; that his mediatorial kingdom will then expire, for having reigned till be bath put all enemies under bis feet, then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all *. The same prophet in another place +, speaking of the Mesfiah's reign, fays, In that day there shall be a Root of Jeffe which Shall Stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. Which last words plainly point at his triumphant peaceful reign on earth; in the grand Sabbath of rest in the seventh millenary of the world, when hostility and discord should totally cease both in the natural and moral world, and all should harmonize in peace and unity: And yet a celebrated critic, whose name I spare on this occasion, and who was

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^{* 1} Cor. xv. + If. xi. 10.

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afterwards a convert to the belief of this doctrine, took learned pains in Greek and Hebrew to justify the following interpretation of those words, his rest shall be glorious, viz. that he should have a noble dormitory or sepulchre, which should afterwards be erected into a chappel for Divine worship. It is really not a little furprizing to fee how some among the learned fludy to make appear how filly they can be in different languages, rather than admit a plain fense of Scripture which suits not with their hypothesis: They that can rest satisfied with such an absurd sense of this passage would, I believe, think it no very animating motive to the enduring of forrows, difgrace and death, to be told, that in reward of their services and sufferings, they should at last have the honour of a handsome burying place.

Those words of our Lord, that his "kingdom is not of this world," are urged against this doctrine in great ignorance of their true meaning; for the world of new heavens and new earth, which will then be the feat of his dominion, will be paradifal, and not according to the condition and spoiled constitution of the present: Besides, it will be of a different, nay contrary nature, in that the administration of his government will have nothing akin to the corrupt maxims and deceitful politicks of the kingdoms that now are, but be a perfect fystem of goodness, righteousness and truth. Glory shall be given to God in the highest, peace shall be established in the earth, good D 2 will

will towards men in every class of inhabitants shall abound, and every thing that hath breath shall praise the Lord. Nor is there any more force in that other objection, that this doctrine supposes our Saviour to descend from a higher to an inferior flate of happiness: This is to meafure heavenly things by our childish ideas borrowed from such as are material and local. In the presence of God is fullness of joy, and according to the degree and manifestation of it is the degree of bliss, so that whether St. Paul was in the body or out of it, when he was spiritually in the third heaven, this made no difference with respect to the revelation, the words caught up being accommodated to fpeaking after the manner of men. Our Lord was even visible in glory on Mount Tabor, and fo far in an impassible state, and yet the same Divine nature when it ceased to be in act and operation, but was unmanifested to his earthly man, left him fubject to the common weakneffes of humanity, and to agonizing fufferings in the garden and on the cross, even to the extorting that heavy complaint, " My God, My God, why hast Thou forfaken me?" But supposing, though not allowing any diminution of glory and blifs arifing from this our Lord's condescension in the case before us; has he not already done more for us in taking upon him the infirmities and miseries of our fallen nature, to fuffer for our fakes? and if the condescension here spoken of may have its uses in advancing the glory of God, and our perfection still tarther, wherefore should we feek for an objection

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objection to such goodness. There can be no manifestations of God to his creatures but in proportion to their capacities; and if the same Saviour who revealed himself to us in a mortal body to save us from our sin, shall again manifest himself in a way suited to the exalted capacities of our regenerate nature, to govern his redeemed sons and daughters, that he may lead them from glory to glory, how amiably do these different dispensations of grace and love diversify the Divine proceedure through the whole economy of man's salvation, and minister occasions for still farther gratitude and praise!

A MEDITATION

on the foregoing Subject.

Come now, O my foul, and all ye that have hitherto loitered too long by the way, let us make no longer tarrying in the tents of the ungodly, lest we also be consumed in their plagues, but leave the vain things of this world to its vain admirers, and halten to join the bleffed company before us, those faithful stewards of the grace of God, who having their loins girded about are as men waiting for their Lord, and as those wise virgins who have trimmed their lamps and made themselves ready for the bridegroom's coming. We cannot plead want of calls and warnings for Ifrael to come out of Ægypt, and the house of Jacob from among the strange children, for the heavens are black D 3 with

with clouds fore-shewing a mighty tempest shortly to be poured out. There has been a shaking in the earth and in the sea, and in the foundations of the kingdoms of this world, and all things feem to be moved as at the presence of the Lord coming to enter into judgment with the children of men, for unemployed talents and despised mercies. Let us then give diligent heed to fill up what is behind of our measure, that being rooted and grounded in the love of God, and in fellowship with the holy Jesus, we may be meet partakers of an inheritance in that kingdom where the will of God shall be done on earth as it is in heaven; where Christ, now persecuted in his members, shall be glorified in his Saints, and his Saints in him, and the Father shall be worshiped throughout the Church triumphant in Spirit and in truth.

Fourthly, This doctrine has in it the nature of a proper medium to reconcile the more spiritual, and also the literal Christian in an amicable agreement of belief, inafmuch as the former will herein find sufficient scope for the most refined spirituality, fince none but the regenerate and spiritual will be fit subjects of this kingdom: The ministration of the spirit in his several gifts and graces will constitute the perfection of this new Jerusalem state, and a principle of Divine love iffuing from the heart of Christians as its foundation, and circulating through all the members of his mystical body, will unite them to him and one another in a bond of such pure and delectable fellowship, as far surpasses the concepft

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conception of every one that has not experienced fome fore-taste of this blessed communion of And secondly, as to the literal Christian who borders upon the Jewish dispensation, and is much external in his apprehensions, he may here innocently entertain his imagination with the material glories and pure delights of an earthly Paradife, till by this gradation he ascends to more sublime contemplations: Nay fuch among the spiritual as are subject to great distractions through too lively and active an imagination, for these also have their upper and their nether springs, may find no small relief. by turning their mental powers from things disorderly and afflictive in the present course of nature, to the future state of the blessed kingdom here spoken of, where their most refined joys will no more fuffer interruption either from defects in the natural or moral world, but all things will minister to that sweet peace which renders the foul both receptive and retentive of The moderate Christian Divine impressions. and well-disposed Jew may here also join hands in some good fellowship of affent, whilst both look forward for a bleffing to the same triumphant Saviour, who as the corner stone betwixt two walls of different aspects gives contact, strength and union to both: Nor is there wanting ground of hope, that when this doctrine shall, by the force of its weight and evidence, recover its lost credit in the Church, it may be a good means among others to remove those scales of ignorance from the eyes of the blinded Jews which now hinder them from owning their - D 4

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and our Messiah as already come, according to the predictions and testimony of Moses and the Prophets, the Apostles and Evangelists, that fo they may see and confess, that that fame Jesus whom their Fathers crucified, was appointed of God to be King over Ifrael, and that through sufferings he should enter into his glory: But as the case now stands betwixt Iew and Christian in unbelief on both sides, the former denying the suffering part of his character at his first advent, and the latter that of his vifible glorious reign on earth at his fecond, the difference between them is a great gulph hindering all communication between the opposite parties; nor shall we ever be able to convince them of their lamentable infidelity on the one hand, whilst they see our determined opposition to fuch plain Scriptures on the other: We can only expect to fucceed in their conversion, with the true key of knowledge in our hands, opening and explaining the properties relating to the bleffed kingdom here spoken of, in the proper and substantial sense of a real and visible kingdom upon earth: So may we hope to perfuade them, that the adorable Meffiah should have a militant as well as triumphant Church on earth, and a spiritual kingdom in both, on this fide of the world of spirits in the eternal heavens, according to that rule of interpretation laid down by that excellent fcholar and good man Mr. J. Smith * before-mentioned, viz. That " all prophecy must relate to some state in this world; as it can give no description .

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^{*} Sele& Discourses, p. 272. 2d Edit.

" nor convey any idea of the Mundus Anima-" rum, or spiritual world; and that therefore " by this rule we must understand what is said " in Scripture, of a new heaven and new " earth, the new Ferusalem, &c. The state " of the bleffed in heaven being major mente " bumana; and much more is it major phan-" tasia, above the reach of our conceptions,

" much more of the imagination."

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Those Christian writers do injustice to the Jews who charge them all indifcriminately with a disbelief of a future state, and with looking only for a Messiah of this world's grandeur, to fight their battles, and to make them victorious with carnal weapons; for tho' there have always been carnal Jews and carnal Christians, who looked no farther than to the things of this wretched life, yet we are not to take our measure of the faith of a people from the corrupt part of them, though that be the greater, at least, not without distinguishing between the found and unfound profesfors: The true Jew ever did and does believe in a refurrection of the just to a blessed and holy life under the government of a spiritual Saviour as well as temporal prince, though of a fecond universal resurrection, and a state of blis to follow in the highest heavens, few, and perhaps none but the inspired amongst them, had any notion, this doctrine being referved as well as many other mysteries, to be brought to light by the Gospel. As to their belief in a refurrection we have abundant testimony in the Scriptures:

Scriptures: Martha the fifter of Lazarus confesses it; the Sadducees were branded for their infidelity in denying it; and the hymn of Zechary styled Benedictus in our Common Prayer Book, is prophetic of the accomplishment of God's promise and oath to the Fathers in the person of Christ, at his second coming. Our Saviour in a conference with the Sadducees refers them to the Scriptures for the truth of a refurrection from the dead, and in particular to that passage, where God saith unto Moses; " I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob:" Now the force of the proof lies in that inference drawn by our Lord, " He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living *." It is plain that the argument appeared conclusive at the time, for we read, that one of the Scribes perceiving that he bad answered them well, &c. And yet where the strength of it lies, is not so obvious to every reader. The learned Mede has helped us to a just and satisfying explanation of this text, by taking in for a supply what these words had a special reference to, viz. God's covenant with the Patriarchs, in respect of which he calls himfelf their God: Now this covenat was to give unto them the land wherein they were strangers; not to their feed only, but to themselves +. " I have established my covenant with them (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) to give them the

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^{*} Mark xii.

[†] For this promise made to the Patriarchs, both separately and jointly, see the following chapters. Gen. xiii. xv. xvii. xxvi. xxxv. Ex. vi. Deut. i. xi. xxx.

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land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers." (Ex. vi. 4.) Now fays Mr. Mede, " If God makes good to Abrabam, Isaac and Jacob, this his covenant, whereby he undertook to be their God, then must they needs one day live again, to inherit the promised land, which hitherto they have not done; for the God that thus covenanted with them, covenanted to make his promife good to them, not dead, but living." And doubtless to this promise of the covenant did allude that prohibition given to the Jews, (Lev. Lev. 25 xxv.) against totally alienating their possessions in the land of Canaan, but referving to themfelves the redemption of them at the following Jubilee: " The land shall not be fold for ever, for the land is mine, for ye are strangers and fojourners with me: And in all the land of your possession, ye shall grant a redemption for the land." And to this I suppose St. Paul alludes *, where he tells the Epbesians, that upon their believing in Christ, they were fealed with the holy spirit of promise, which, says he, is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, i.e. the restoration of all things in the glorious kingdom of Christ, purchased by his sufferings and death. prohibition to the Jews before-mentioned, not totally to alienate their lands, had not respect to that bleffed inheritance of which Canaan was but a type, we should be at a loss to find out any good meaning in the reason assigned for it,

* Ephes. i. 14.

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wiz. because ye are strangers and sojourners with me, which would rather be a reason for indifference about their title to lands of so short and uncertain a tenure; but when we consider, that this law had its typical allusion also, even to their unalienable inheritance in paradisal Canaan, it served as an anchor of hope to keep them stedsast in their saith and trust in God, under all the changes and chances of their miserable pilgrimage upon this earth, in which the Jews have now been without any inheritance in that land for so many hundred years.

It appears then, according to the promise and covenanting oath of God, that the Jewish fathers and their true spiritual feed shall inherit a Canaan, not that earthly country (the figure of the promise) which their descendents possessed without any great advantage of temporal bleffings over their neighbours, and which now makes but an inconfiderable part of the Turkish dominions; for this appears no such great matter for God to give his favourite fervants with fuch distinction and solemnity of covenant; nor yet the empyreal eternal heavens, which can have no type on earth, and of which state the Jews seem to have had no idea; but that part of paradife or nature restored which shall correspond to antient Canaan, and is in a subordinate sense called the kingdom of heaven *, as the heavenly powers both spiri-

^{*} Emeravios in Scripture meaning as well what is from as what is in heaven.

tual and material will manifest themselves, and be the working principles in and through that kingdom for a double bleffing to the children of promise. In this new heaven and new earth, after the first heaven and first earth are passed away *, will gloriously appear the new Jerufalem come down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband +. wherein God will tabernacle with men, and . drink the new wine of the kingdom with his disciples. In this delectable country, which the antient worthies fo much fought after and defired t, many pious heathens, who in the darkness of their dispensation felt after God and found him ||, shall meet from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, and fit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom ¶, and eat of the tree of life which groweth in the midst of the city of God, and on either fide of the river **: And here in this regeneration of nature, the holy Twelve who followed their Lord in fuch eminence of character, shall fit on twelve thrones judging under him the twelve tribes of Israel ++. These and numberless other glorious things in holy writ spoken of the city of God, cannot with propriety admit of any other interpretation than in reference to a middle state betwixt the present earthly and the final heavenly.

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^{*} Rev. xxi. † Ibid. † Heb. xi. | Acts xvii. 27. ¶ Luke xiii. ** Rev. xxii. †† Matt. xix.

That the wicked and all that have oppreffed and perfecuted the godly in this life shall in one way or other be witnesses to their glory in the kingdom here spoken of, was believed by the Jews, and is a doctrine rendered credible by the parable of Dives and Lazarus. In the third chapter of the book of Wisdom. where mention is made of the righteous that fuffered affliction in this life, and whose departure is taken for misery by the unwise, it is faid of them, that " at the time of their vifitation (refurrection) they shall shine, and run to and fro like sparks among the stubble; they shall judge the nations, and have dominion over the people:" And in chap. v. " The righteous man shall stand in great boldness before the face of fuch as have afflicted him. and made no account of his labours: When they fee it they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and be amazed at the strangeness of his falvation: And they, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves: This was he whom we had fometimes in derifion, and a proverb of reproach: We fools. accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour: How is he numbered with the children of God, and his lot is among the Saints." If it be asked here, how the wicked, living or dead, can find a place in Paradife, it might be fufficient to reply with another queftion: How Satan could find a place in Eden where he tempted Eve; or how two persons may be, the one happy, and the other miferable, in the fame external circumstances. evil

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evil spirit, bodied or un-embodied, standing in the forms of its anguishing nature, and shut up in the centre of its own dark fire, would be, to every purpose of suffering, in hell, though placed before the throne of God, nay most miserable there, as the surrounding Divine glories would be most contrary and hostile to the condition of its existence. All nature, we know, in its gayest scenes has no charms, nay is overspread with gloom, and has a ghastly appearance to the guilty foul under the horrible sense of its condition, nor would even Paradife be manifested in any way of comfort to fuch a one though placed among the children of the kingdom, and under the shadow of the tree of life, for the gulf that separates them is not distance of place, but difference of principle or nature; the condition of foul in this respect is all in all. Matter is hence supplied for a fatisfying answer to that question which naturally at times arises in the mind, viz. Whether departed happy fouls shall know one another in a future state; for if it be part of the punishment of the wicked, to behold the glories of the righteous whom they have despised and persecuted here; what doubt can be made, whether the Saints in their feveral clasfes and orders will hold sweet society together, and have a pleasing remembrance of their past joint labours, faith and patience; as such a recollection must be an addition to their fellowship in bliss, and therefore not to be supposed wanting to the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the noble

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ble army of Martyrs, nor to the universal Church triumphant. The state of supreme blis in the third Heaven, after the final refurrection, may indeed be attended with fo great a change of our nature, a removal fo far diftant from the present circumstances of it, as to obliterate all ideas of earthly things, and fully to employ every faculty of the Soul in the fruition of the divine beatitudes: But nothing can be pronounced of that superlatively happy state, where God hath prepared such great and glorious things for them that love him as pass man's understanding, and are not to be uttered by the tongue of an Angel.

Fifthly, This doctrine of a middle state of bliss under the government of Christ, at his fecond Advent to reign with his Saints on earth, removes that stumbling block of final reprobation, by giving all due distinction of favour to the election of grace, and at the same time vindicates the goodness of God from that injurious imputation of unmercifulness with which rigid Predestinarians reproach the most amiable of his attributes, and that under a false notion of doing honour to his fovereignty, as if his fovereignty were not more glorified by the largest displays of his goodness, than by cutting it short with an arbitrary sentence of reprobation passed on the greater part of the human race; a doctrine leading to presumption, despair or atheism; a doctrine which reflects infarny and odium on the Divine theocracy, and deforms the beautiful face of religion with ug-

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liness and monstrosity; nay a doctrine imposfible to be revealed or capable of being rendered credible by ten thousand miracles, forasmuch as no possible evidence can overthrow the certainty of this indubitable proposition, That God is love; and as he is effentially and perfeetly fo, the extent of his goodness must be commensurate with his works; nay his goodness extends farther than creation, for it shall be made manifest also in redemption: The prefent evil of pain and fuffering is no argument against the truth of this, seeing it is not to be considered as the punishment but also as the means leading to the cure of moral evil, and God's justice as the minister of his mercy; and how far the most miserable of created beings may in time become fit objects for the exercise of this, we know not; it becomes us best to believe that nothing but some impossibility in their nature for receiving grace can place them beyond the possibility of their recovery.

As the word elect, or chosen, signifies in Scripture an eminent distinction of grace in savour of some, so also has it a spiritual reference to the called, chosen and faithful *, as glorified in the blessed kingdom before us, and in this latter sense is made use of three several times in the lxvth chap. of Isaiah, where the prophet foretells the new ferusalem state, the new heavens, and the new earth as the portion of the Lord's blessed servants both from among

^{*} Rev. xvii. 14.

Jews and Gentiles, making one Church, under the name of his holy mountain, fignifying thereby both its stability and exaltation; and these he contrasts with the nominal Jew and Christian, The reprobate silver *, who shall be rejected from having any inheritance with them: " Behold, my fervants stall eat, but ye shall be hungry; my fervants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: Mine elect shall inherit my mountain.—Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands, &c." Here is an election of the called and faithful to honour and blifs above their brethren; and he that gained ten pounds in his Master's service is set over ten cities: But what faith the Lord to the ungodly, (ver. 12.) "Because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear, but did evil before mine eyes, therefore, &c." And what faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the grace given makes the difference now (though all the power be from grace) betwixt the goodness and severity of God, towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness, otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off +. All absolute personal reprobation is here disallowed, and the cause affigned why some do enter, and others enter not into the joy of their Lord: To man's co-operation with grace, by grace (for though help be given there is no compaffion) are the promifes made in general, and all have sufficient power given them, (though

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^{*} Fer. vi. 30. + Rom. xi. 22.

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all have not faith, through not stirring up the gift of God that is in them) but to the election of grace, (the higher vouchsafements of it) is predestinated the inheritance in the blessed kingdom of Christians on earth, the lot of the firstborn from the dead, at the first resurrection, who are typified by the particular privileges of the first-born among the Hebrews before the giving of the law, among which were the priesthood in their respective families, the pre-eminence over their brethren, and a double portion in the inheritance of their fathers goods: Now to these answer the distinguished privileges of the holy first-born from the dead, and heirs of the double portion, even of heavenly and earthly good things in the millennial kingdom: And under Christ, the first, and head of the first-born among many brethren, they have in their feveral degrees of glory, the pre-eminence over their brethren who obtain not the same goodly heritage, for they are a chosen generation, and elected to higher honour; and they are also dignified with a royal priesthood, for "Bleffed and holy is he that hath part in the first refurrection, on fuch the fecond death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him athoufand years *."

Though this election of Grace (so called by way of eminence and preference according to the will of God) be predestinated, fore-ap-

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^{*} R.w. xx. 6.

pointed, to reign with Christ on earth, yet not fo absolutely and indefectibly as that man cannot forfeit it, for both grace and glory must stand in confistence with human liberty; and therefore the apostle, where he speaks of the promised rest, speaks also of the danger of losing it *, with an exhortation to fear; and he puts a double If by way of emphatical caution upon the entrance into the fabbath of rest, in order to shew the conditionality of the promise; and refers to the case of the antient Jews, who through unbelief entered not into the typical Canaan, that figure of the true rest which remained to, or for, the children of God in the millennial kingdom, which Joshua (translated Jesus in our bibles) could not give them; for then, fays he, David would not afterwards have spoken of another day (Sabbath of Rest.) And as if on purpose to shew us in the type, how the children of the promife might come short of the bleffing typified, we read +, that when the faint hearted Israelites were ready to turn back upon the discouraging report of the spies, Joshua and Caleb encouraged them in the following words, "The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land: If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land and give it us: Only rebel not against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land." In which words the condition of the promise to his own elect people (according to the type) is plainly fet forth.

* Heb. iv.

+ Numb. xiii.

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Esau's character was doubly typical. In his folly he stood in the image of the earthly fenfual man, but as to his primogeniture he represented the first-born from the dead according to the kingdom of grace, whose birth-right is paradifal glory in renewed nature: Now profane Esau fold his birth-right for a little contemptible gratification of animal nature, fo may these, through like profaneness, forfeit their inheritance in the riches of Christ's kingdom, by giving the preference to the vanities of this short life, as Judas sold his throne among the twelve in his mafter's kingdom for a trifling fum of money; an important caution this to him that thinketh he standeth fure upon his election, to take heed left he fall. The apostle introduces this sad case of Esau in Heb. xii. and comforts his Jewish converts with the confideration of their still standing in the lot of their appointment to place and fellowship in the general affembly and Church of the first-born written in heaven; and yet he ushers in this fubject (ver. 15.) with a caution to look diligently left any of them should fail of the grace (here meant favour) of God; and then proposes the case of Esau. The 17th ver. is of awful confideration, "Ye know how that af-" terward, when he would have inherited the " bleffing, he was rejected, for he found no " place of repentance, though he fought it " carefully with tears." This text has been drawn into a dreadful conclusion against themelves, by many godly penitents, as though it declared the irremissibleness of great fins, even E 3

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upon the most anguishing repentance of a contrite heart: Nor have some such been able to receive comfort in their diffress from a hundred plain testimonies of Scripture to the remission of all sin upon true repentance and faith in the blood of Christ. But as they who are fearful and of a tender conscience (as is often the case with the best) are more apt to be cast down by a seeming severity, than to apply to the comfort of their mir-is the promises that belong to them, it may administer fome relief to fuch, to observe, that these words have no reference to the final condition of Efau, but only to the privileges of birth-right which he had made over to Jacob, and the grant could not be revoked after its confirmation by Isaac; and therefore to have the pre-eminence, or be lord over his brethren, which by right of nature belonged to Efau, was now become the privilege and right of Jacob: In other refpects he was capable of a bleffing, and had it as well as his younger brother, even of the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth. case then, transferred to its antitype in the kingdom of Grace, will stand thus: The elect or privileged with higher grace and favour, and as fuch appointed to be the first-born from the dead, and consequently to have the pre-eminence both in order of time and dignity over their brethren, even a portion in the kingdom of Christ in glorified nature; if they shall forfeit their title to this promised inheritance, by difgracing their high and holy calling, making no more account of the precious gift of God than than of a profane thing, as Efau did by his birth-right, in felling it for a mess of pottage; in this case it shall be taken away from them, and given to their younger [inferior] brethren, who shall be adopted in their room to fill up the number of the elect, whilst they are degraded to an inferior lot, nor shall be able to recover what they have thus alienated, no not with fupplications and tears, there being no place left for repentance in this matter; and yet through repentance and conversion their souls may be faved, yet fo as by fire. This is no flight fall, no small loss to many a one, who go on in forrow and fadness afterwards all their life long, without knowing the cause of it; for though it be not manifested to the reason and understanding, yet the spirit of the sufferer is fadly fensible of it, and this occasions not only great loss of inward comfort, but also much of mourning and wo even to the outward man, oftentimes driving him to despair. The way for the poor foul in this case, is not to seek for its refreshment in the vain pleasures and amusements of this life, according to the advice and example of carnal men; for this would only ferve to its undoing, and lead it infenfibly on to final perdition; but to endure its chastifement patiently, and to walk humbly with its God in repentance, and faith in that blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin, going on thus in hope, till the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and it shall be comforted with the comforts that be of God. Let not the cavilling reasoner, nor E 4 the

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the mocking Ishmaelite turn this doctrine in ridicule, and make merry with so serious and concerning a subject, for it may have a deeper ground than they know of: It will become them better to stand in awe and sin not; and to consider from whence they may already have fallen, or to what they have not as yet attained in the way of their acceptance.

Whatever is wanting in point of name to give authority to this interpretation of the above passage, it has at least moderation to recommend it; as it steers the middle way betwixt giving encouragement to any prefumptuous reliance on the Divine favour on the one hand, and driving the dejected penitent to despair on the other: And as to what relates to the doctrine of election and reprobation in the history of Esau and Jacob, that offence of Calvin's fystem is here removed: Justice is done to the letter of Scripture, and the Divine attributes are vindicated from the foul afpersion of the horrible decree: And let me add too, that the Divine fovereignty is here acknowledged in an election, which offers no violence to Divine goodne's, nor leaves room for cavilling reason to find fault, or question the equity of such a preference.

It is generally understood, as if God finally reprobated Efau, his whole man, both in foul and body, but this arises from ignorance as touching his typical character, not only with respect to the primogeniture or birth-right, but

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also that part of it wherein he stood as a figure of the first adamical earthly man in fallen flesh and blood, as opposed to Jacob, who was the image of the fecond adamical man regenerate in Christ, who by his divine power of a spiritual life should subdue and cast out the sleshly, finful, reprobate nature in which is the curse: Now the hatred of God passed not upon the person of Esau, but that which was figured by him; for the old man, the corruptible part in Jacob was as much hated of God as that in Efau, and the spiritual heavenly part, by grace, in Efau as much loved as the same in Jacob: So that in this respect Esau and Façob were mutual types representing each a part) in the other, and both jointly figurative of every individual person of the human race, in whom these two twins, good and evil, wrestle together for lordship and pre-eminence, the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other:—Reason in Babel may boast all it pleases, but the history of the Old Testament was chiefly given us for the fake of the mystery, and he that reacheth not to the truth of the figure under the truth of the letter, will never fee clearly how those two great witnesses of God, the law and the gospel (going along with each other throughout the Scriptures both in letter and spirit) reflect light and confenting testimony on each other as plainly as face answereth to face in a glass: And as the language of the Old Testament is in its highest use the language of types, so those Scriptures rightly understood do greatly illustrate illustrate the economy of man's redemption by Jesus Christ from the beginning in the mystery, and shew forth the struggle that has ever been betwixt the two births, and will continue to the end of our warfare; and accordingly we find good and evil figured in opposite characters, one against the other all the way, eminently in Cain and Abel, Ifaac and Ishmael, Esau and Jacob, David and Goliah, betwixt the Hebrews, and the Ægyptians, &c. as also in numberless circumstances of the same characters, plainly shewing that these things are an allegory as truly as the typical characters, of Sarab and Hagar, explained as fuch by St. Paul *. Nor is that objection of any weight, that fanciful men have often mistaken their own imaginations for the figurative sense of the Scriptures; seeing this only proves that there are false as well as true Allegorists; and such an objector who sets up the letter against the spirit, instead of joining both together, would do well to confider, that his argument, like a fword with two edges, has also one for himself, for who more dangerously fanciful than the false reasoners and false critics on the letter of Scripture, who have rejected its mystical sense, who have filled the world with their disagreeing and contradictory senses of it, and poisoned the Church with their heretical The following quotation from an enlightened author, little understood of many and therefore despised, is very apposite to this subject. "Know for certain, That this first

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^{*} Gal. iv.

" book of Moses was written wholly from the " fpirit of prophecy, intimating what each act or sentence of the history holds forth in the " figure: And whofoever will read and rightly " understand these acts of the Patriarchs, he " must modelize or represent in his mind the " old and new man, and fet Christ and Adam " one against the other, and then he may un-" derstand all; and without this he understands " nothing hereof but a child-like history; " though in truth it is fo rich and full of myf-" teries, that no man from the cradle unto the " longest age is able to express them, although " he had obtained knowledge and understand-" ing thereunto in his childhood: And albeit " we have obtained some apprehensions and " meaning of them from the gift of God, yet " we cannot express all, nor would the world " be able to receive it *."

The divine institution of a sabbatical or seventh year's solemnity among the Jews has a plain typical reference to the seventh chiliad or millenary of the world, according to a well-known tradition among the Jewish doctors, adopted by many in every age of the Christian Church; that this world will attain to its limit at the end of six thousand years; though all who have held this doctrine have not alike believed in the new heaven and new earth to succeed for a place of glorious rest to the Saints. The mystical sense of this sabbatical year has

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^{*} See Jacob Behmen's Mysterium magnum, p. 307.

been judiciously explained by the Rev. Mr. Richard Clarke, in his excellent essay on the number seven, where he well observes, that as both the fabbath of days, and the fabbath of years had a backward aspect to the bleffings of nature, receiving their full completion in the fabbath of creation, so also did they look forward to a fimilar fabbath of redemption, when the children of the kingdom should enter again into their rest. And the same learned author in his treatise on the prophetical numbers of Daniel and John, observes that the fix thoufand years preceding the fabbath of rest will not run out their full course, which he proves from that prophecy of our Lord speaking of the great woes of the last times, " That those days should be shortned for the elects sake *," alluding to which are those words of the Apostle +, " He will finish the work (or account) and cut it short in righteousness, because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." And though what Mr. Clarke deduces from that circumstance of our Saviour's expiring on the cross at the ninth hour, or three o'clock in the afternoon, and fo entering into the paradifal rest before the fixth day of the fervile week ended: Though, I fay, this obfervation does not carry with it the force of a particular prophecy, or express testimony of Scripture, yet it holds forth the light of a strong typical prefiguration; when we confider Christ as the first fruits, and head of the first-born that

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^{*} Matt. xxiv. + Rom. ix. 28.

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should enter into his rest, and that no circumstance relating to his life or death was accidental, but full of important fignification; fo that upon the whole, we have good ground to believe that this present world will reach its end before fix thousand years from the Creation shall have had their full accomplishment.

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Among the privileges annexed to the fabbatical year, the following are very observable to our purpose: First, that all the Israelites were obliged at this time to release their debtors from all obligations of payment; and to release their bond fervants from all farther fervitude, provided they had ferved fix years; and fo it was called The Lord's Release, and that not without a very fignificant meaning; for it is to be remarked, that none but Hebrew debtors and fervants were to enjoy these privileges; all foreigners were excluded, no release being allowed to them in these cases, but only in the great fabbatical year of the Jubilee, at the expiration of feven common fabbatical or fortynine years, when they also should have their redemption: Now the former was called The Lord's Release, as it respected those whom he dignifyed with the title of his portion and lot, in preference to all other people, because he had a favour unto them; For the Lord's portion is his people, and Jacob is the lot of his inberitance *. The Israelites therefore being his chosen, there must needs be a distinction of

^{*} Deut. XXXII. 9.

privileges in their favour: This points in the mystery directly to the election of grace under the gospel-covenant, of which the Israelites in their dispensation were a type allowed of all who acknowledged any spiritual meaning in the Scriptures, and they who do not are more blind than the literal Jew after the flesh. If then a prior release (redemption) be here typisied, where can we suppose it to fall but upon the family of the first-born from the dead, written in heaven, when at the time appointed for the first resurrection, they shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God; feeing it cannot allude to their condition in this life; for here in general they have a hard fervice without release, dwelling under poverty, oppression and contempt, in the tents of ungodliness among such as are indeed nominally their brethren, but really Moabites and Ammonites, Ishmaelites and Hagarenes: However, let them be comforted under the remembrance of the following words of our Saviour, and contentedly bear their cross in a patient conformity to his suffering states: "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be forrowful, but your forrow shall be turned into joy *."

In the 14th chapter of *Deut*, where the respective duties of the sabbatical year are injoined, is the following express command of God: "If there be among you a poor man

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^{*} John xvi. 20.

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of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates in thy land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt furely lend him fufficient for his need: Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, faying, The seventh year of release is at hand. &c. Thou shalt furely give him, and thine heart shalt not be grieved when thou givest unto him, &c." And with respect to the release of the bond fervant, man or woman, is the following command: "When thou fendest him out from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty, thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy stock." But instead of obedience to these precepts, which the law of humanity within should have prompted them to, the lews in time waxed hard-hearted and covetous, and neither remitted their debts, nor released their bond fervants at the time appointed; but contented themselves with the form of godliness, and such legal observances as cost them little; and yet they boasted of their religion, crying out, The temple of the Lord-The temple of the Lord *: or in other words, The Church—The Church, We are the true Church. And they would fast too at times, and let their poor brethren fast always for them, rather than supply their wants. This their cruelty and hard heartedness towards their debtors, bond fervants, and poor brethren, in violation of the laws before-mentioned, explains

^{*} Fer. vii.

many paffages in the prophets, wherein they are reproved for their hypocrify, and mockfervices in religious worship: Thus in Isaiah*, " Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loosen the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens of your poor brethren) and to let the oppressed (bond-servant) go free, and that ye break every yoke, &c." And most probable it is that the following petition in our Lord's prayer: Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors *, does particularly allude to this obligation of the fabbatical year; as the word Οφειλεταις properly fignifies such as are our debtors by loan: Quere then, if this obligation in certain circumstances, for I don't say all, is not still in force on Christians as much as it was on the Jews; nay more abundantly, as the gospel is a dispensation of higher mercy, both in its ministration on the part of God, and its obligation on our part, than was the law given by Moses. We are well aware what the sons of felfishness have to offer in objection to this, from difference of times and circumstances, the particular constitution of trading nations, and from various family confiderations; and with fuchlike cobweb arguments the avaritious miser, with thousands in the stocks, endeavours to conceal from the view of his own mind, his paffion for filthy lucre, and his greater love for money than for his God: And where this is the case, the griping Jew and greedy Christian may shake hands over their

^{*} Is. lviii.

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curfed Mammon, and wink at each other's want of faith, nay wish that they had none at all; for what little they have, the one in the God of Abraham, the other in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, will only serve to render them the more inexcusable, and to condemn them to greater torment. If we impartially compare the general practice at this day with the above duties of the Sabbatical year, we cannot but see how far we come short of a Jewish righteousness, and that we are Christians only in the letter and not in the spirit, in name and profession, but not in deed and in truth; for where in a hundred is the person that will give, or even lend to his needy brother a moderate fum of money without voking him with fecurity and interest, and exacting the uttermost farthing? Or who fends away a faithful fervant liberally supply'd from his stock, after having had the fweat and labour of the best of his years? And as to those shameless Traders who traffick for poor Negroes as for horses, and treat them with greater cruelty, wherefore do they take the name of Christ in their mouths? for what is Christianity in those who are void of humanity? O Christendom how art thou fallen! Thou hast a name that thou livest, but art dead, and unless thou repent and do the first works (of primitive Christians) how applicable to thee is that threatning of him that holdeth the feven stars in his right hand: "I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place *."

* Rev. ii. 5.

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Another memorable particular relating to the Sabbatical year is, that during that period the earth, by an extraordinary benediction from heaven, brought forth its increase spontaneously, for the common benefit of all; for as there was no cultivation of land that year, fo neither was there to be any appropriation of its fruits +. This bleffing on nature by a fuspension of the curse which first subjected man to hard labour, has a special typical reference to the Great Sabbath of Rest in the Millennial Kingdom in regenerated Nature, when the heavenly influences shall tincture all the properties of this lower creation, and work in and through them, to the manifestation of the divine wonders in unspeakable beauty and variety of productions, and when the renewed earth shall of its own accord give forth its increase of paradisal fruits, and God, even our God, shall give it his bleffing. And as to the common enjoyment of the bleffings of nature in this year without distinction of property: This circumstance does evidently set forth the universal bleffedness of that State wherein the unconfined, unappropriated riches of Paradife shall be the common lot and portion of all the Elect or first-born from the dead; of which we have also a farther prefiguration in the infant State of the Church, for a short time, under the Gospel, even at that time when " the multitude of them that believed were of "one heart, and of one foul, neither faid any

+ Levit. xxv.

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"of them, that ought of the things which he "possessed was his own, but they had all "things in common, and great grace was upon "them all ‡." This holy society of Christian people, the model of a perfect visible Church on earth, may be considered as an earnest of the glorious Communion here treated of, when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and God shall pour his spirit upon all sless; when Christian simplicity will stand in need of no borrowed defence from the wisdom of the serpent, and charity know no bounds; when righteousness and peace shall kiss each other, and the name of the Holy City shall be — The Lord is there ||.

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But as the children of the Kingdom are in the Unity, agreeing fellow members in the same mystical body, jointly partaking of and freely circulating the same spiritual and temporal nourishment, so the children of this world stand in the multiplicity whose type is Babel, the effence of which is division, and they are fo far from being of one heart and mind, that they have every one a separate will, drawing all to felf as its Center, and feek only their own things, whence comes envy, covetousness and enmity: But these are self-excluded from the heavenly City; for it is said *, "Without are dogs, and forcerers, and whoremongers, and idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lye:" Now greediness has the dog for

[‡] Acts iv. | Ezek. xlviii. 35. * Rev. xxii. 15.

its well known emblem, and covetousness is stiled idolatry in Scripture. How many deceive themselves in this matter with lying pretences of caring for their families, whilst their true motive is an evil covetousness in their own hearts: The practice indeed is strongly supported by the authority of example in every class of life, and is therefore by many accounted wisdom; but then it is no better than the wisdom of the unjust steward, which however commended here, will be found folly at last and punished hereaster; and what greater punishment than to be debarred all inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God *. There is the greater cause for insisting here on the danger of the love of money, as well because it is so general amongst us, as because nothing more indisposes the heart of man than this temper for defiring or believing in any better state than the present, where only he can hope to find the means of gratifying this fordid passion; and therefore such will be against the doctrine of Christ's Millennial Kingdom from principle, ever holding fast to that where they may add house to house and land to land, or find increase from their money by publick or private usury, for where their beloved treasure is, there will their hearts be also: Nay to persons in this disposition, a community of good things even in heaven cannot appear any defireable circumstance of happiness. Milton has a beautiful reflexion on the incapacity in persons of so depraved a mindfor relishing celestial joys, tho' they were actually transported to the blessed abodes; and this in the character of *Mammon*, whom he represents in heaven as chiefly taken up with the external glories of the place, and more intent on the riches of the pavements than on the beatistick vision.

When the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously t, the treasures of nature shall be displayed in all their primæval rich variety, as well to manifest the wonderful skill of the Divine artificer, as to beautify the dwelling place of his faints, who are the true heirs both of temporal and heavenly good things; and tho' now for a season they lie buried among the pots and brick-kilns of their Ægyptian oppressors, yet at the time appointed, now near, they shall be delivered with a mighty hand, and spoil the Ægyptians of their usurped riches, their jewels of filver and jewels of gold; for the King's Daughter, the Church of the first-born, the bride of Christ, as she is all glorious within, fo shall she be all glorious without, when her marriage with the Lamb is come, as faintly imaged by the external splendors of Solomon's reign, who made filver and gold as plenteous as the stones in Jerusalem +: Now if his typical reign was so glorious, how much more shall that of the

‡ If. xxiv. 23. + 2 Chron. i.

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divine Solomon, the true Prince of peace, exceed in glory? Let none be offended because filver and gold and precious stones are here mentioned among the productions of paradifal Nature, fince these materials, even in their present imperfect kind, were by divine command made use of to add magnificence to the Tabernacle and the Aaronical garments of old, shadowing forth the higher glories of the new Jerusalem state, according to that pompous description of it given in Rev. xxi. and elsewhere, and of which our highest ideas at prefent must fall as far short, as the difference is betwixt degenerate and regenerate nature; and yet the good things of the latter can only now be represented to us by the best we know in the former, as our apprehensions reach no higher. The love of these things indeed is now forbidden us, and severe restraints laid on their use, as through the corrupt passions of our fallen nature, and the general abuse, they are not only a fnare to virtue and a hindrance to the love of God, but become the food of vanity, avarice and pride, matter of strife, wrong and robbery, and the occasion of most of the evils that happen in the world: But all danger of this kind will then cease, for felfishness, and a defire to engross the bleffings of nature in property will be no more; all Zion's fons and daughters will be difinterested and pure, and all things pure to them: Nay, according to Zechariah, the very pots of Ferufalem and the bells of the horses shall be holiness to the Lord, denoting that all, even

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even the most indifferent things, shall be done to the glory of God, and so have their fanctified use; for where divine love is the governing principle, it consecrates every service and thing: Thus shall all God's works praise him under the triumphant reign of his beloved son, by ministering occasion of gratitude and love to his Saints, who shall join in one universal symphony of praise to his divine Majesty, saying: "Heaven and earth are sull of thy glory; Glory be to thee, O Lord most high!"

MEDITATION

Can we think of the bleffed change that shall take place in the kingdom here spoken of, and not feel our hearts burn within us through an ardent longing for it? Can we any longer fet our minds upon the vanities of this wretched world, when we believe that shortly, all the treasures and delights of Paradise will be the common portion of them that love God? Or can we be so pufillanimous as to flinch at fome short crosses and trials in following a suffering Saviour to fuch glory; especially when we confider, that our purification from the corruptions of our nature, and our qualification to reign with him, lye through our conformity to his life and to his death. Say now, ye fons of violence, ye rapacious Nimrods of the earth, who cause such desolation all around you, laying waste countries, and facrificing thousands to your ambition, how will you find a place in that kingdom where all

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is peace and brotherly love? Ye wily politicians who teach the world by rule, how to equivocate and deceive; what portion have you to expect among the children of fimplicity and truth? You shameless perverters of justice, who, under colour and cloak of law, drive a trade of iniquity by fophistry, subornation and fraud; and break the hearts of your impoverished clients by needless and expensive delays of justice, how in vain will you plead for admiffion into the bleffed fociety of just men made perfect, who can have no fellowship with the deceitful? You griping and hard hearted mifers, usurers and extortioners, who oppress the poor, wring the sweat from the brow of the half-famished labourer, and shut up the bowels of your compassion from your needy brethren; how can ye look for that mercy which is only promised to the merciful; nor indeed is it posfible for any other to enter into the joy of their Lord. Be wife now, O my foul, to take warning by the folly, fin and danger of thy deluded brethren, who are thus content to barter unspeakable, lasting blis for unsatisfying pleafures which wifer heathens have despised; for a name, a breath of popular applause from the unthinking giddy multitude, which has nothing in it defireable but what vain imagination gives it, nothing durable; for uncertain riches, which they either do not, or cannot long enjoy, and which will not profit them in the day of wrath: For fuch trifles light as air, do many fell their fouls, their faviour, their every hope of glory. But whilst thou

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thou condemnest the folly of others, beware, O my foul, that thou comest not under the fame condemnation though in another form; nor lull thyself into a false and fatal security by deceitful comparisons, fancying that all is well with thee, because thou doest not such and fuch things; but enter into thy inner chamber, try and examine thy thoughts, and fearch out thy spirit, to see if there be not any way of wickedness in thee, no beloved Dalilah unforfaken, no darling fin yet unfacrificed to him who has the supreme right to thy undivided affections; for who can say that he is out of all danger from the constitutional fin that most easily besets him? Nay, how few can fay to their own heart, yet lackest thou but one thing! Behold, thy all is at stake for life or for death, and a full furrender of all that thou art and hast, without referves, into the hands of thy fovereign Lord, is now required of thee; if therefore there be any false love within, that separates betwixt thee and thy God, any lurking idol in the temple of thy heart, however artfully concealed, however speciously disguised, thou must not spare it, but bring it forth to be hewed in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. Make then no longer tarrying, but put thyself in readiness to meet thy Saviour, for the day is at hand, and the morning redness in the East proclaims the approaching advent of the Great Messiab coming to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day *.

^{* 2} Theff. i. 10.

CHAPTER the Second.

That a glorious state of the Church under the triumphant reign of Christ on earth, is plainly foretold and promised in many places of the canonical Scriptures; and that this doctrine was generally received by the primitive Chriftians in the earliest ages of the Church.

F the Jews were without excuse in not receiving the plain testimony of their Prophets concerning Christ's suffering state, their hardness and infidelity are still more reprehensible in rejecting their Messiah, when he came credential'd with every evidence of his divine mission and character, to fulfil all righteousness, to put an end to the typical facrifices of the law by the facrifice of himself, and to give a completion to those prophecies which relate to his state of humiliation. The true cause of their rejecting him proceeded not from want of clearness, either in the prophecies or their application, but from their carnal hearts, and false conceptions of dignity and honour; they were averse to suffering, disgrace and contempt themfelves, fo could not acknowledge these in the character of the Prince and Saviour of Israel, not confidering, that a world blinded and corrupted by fin makes false estimates of all things, counting the wisdom of God no better than foolishness, and casting reproach upon those whom the Lord delighteth to honour; whence our Saviour on a time explained to the Jews

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one chief ground of their infidelity - " How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and feek not the honour that cometh of God only." And at another time having taken occasion to prepare Peter for his approaching ignominious death, and the disciple, like a man of honour (in the fense of the world) shewing himself offended thereat, saying "Be "it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto "thee," he gave him the following sharp reproof, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou art an " offence unto me, for thou favourest not the "things that be of God, but those that be of " men." How many praying Christians with Jewish hearts, were they to speak the truth, would confess the like offence at the shame of the cross! But when we speak of the Jews in a generality, we allow for fome exceptions, for many among them believed in him, and some confessed him; though few, not even his disciples till enlightened by the holy spirit, conceived rightly of the nature of our redemption by him, or of the glory of his kingdom, as appears from Luke ch. xxi.

The belief of the Jews then as concerning the reign of the Messiah, was that of a regnant and triumphant Messiah; and here they certainly went upon right ground; for to him was promised the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession.— His dominion should be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the

^{*} Pfalm ii.

ends of the earth +, and his enemies should be his footstool ‡; but here, through the blindness and carnality of their hearts, they erred again, in not feeing and believing that his reign should be spiritual as well as temporal, and that he should rule in them as well as over them, for they were called to holiness in many places *. The prophet Jeremiah ¶ explains the nature of the new and better covenant which God would make with Ifrael, as an inward and spiritual dispensation, the law of the spirit of life, (which is the true gospel law) by putting his law into their inward parts, and writing it in their hearts, fo that thus taught of God, they would not any more stand in need of written rules or human instructors; and | Joel foretells that God would pour out his spirit upon all flesh under this glorious dispensation of the Spirit; and this inward cleanfing and renovation of a gospel-spirit the true, inward Jew forefaw, defired, and in a measure enjoyed in his day, according to that prayer of David; " Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a " right spirit within me;" for all true Israelites drank of that rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ; but with the Jews in general, and confidered as a nation, it was far otherwise: They, like Jewish Christians, placed , all in external forms, in temple-fervices, and in cleanfing the outfide of the cup; they thought

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⁺ Zechariah ix. 10. ‡ Pf. cx. 1. * Exodus xix. 6. xxii. 31. Leviticus xi. 44. 45. Numb. xvi. 3. ¶ Jer. xxxi. ¶ Joel xi. 28.

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it enough to give God good words and good ceremonies whilst their hearts were far from him; and of this their blindness as to the true spiritual worship, St. Paul takes notice *. where speaking of the different ministrations of the letter and of the spirit, and the far greater excellence of the latter, he faith, " Even "unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is "upon their hearts: Nevertheless, when it (Israel) " shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken "away +:" implying that there will come a time for their conversion. But neither did the blindness of the Jews end here, for they also grofsly erred in their belief concerning the nature of the Messiah's temporal kingdom, suppofing it should be according to the model of earthly kingdoms, and that under his reign they should be exalted above other nations in this world's grandeur; whereas it appears from that remarkable prophecy of Jacob, that when Shilob (the Messiah) should come, or make his first appearance in the flesh, the government and legislative power should depart from Judah +, as they actually did, and were trans-, and lated to the Roman jurifaiction; and yet Christ ws in was to be a king, as all the Prophets have spovas far ken; and to this end did he come into the world, placed not in majesty but seeming weakness, to lay s, and the foundation of a kingdom which should not ought be shaken, to suffer many things before he entered upon the glories of his reign, and to' dus xix. make ready a people prepared for the Lord? xvi. 3.

^{* 2} Cor. iii. † 2 Cor. iii. 15, 16. ‡ Genesis xlix. 10.

that he might rule over willing and obedient subjects in the day of his power.

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The outward kingdom of the Messiah was to be founded in grace; and in order to raife up this glorious superstructure, a great and gradual preparation-work was first to take place in the hearts of many, to make them meet to partake in this rich inheritance; an aftonishing scene of divine wonders was to be opened in the birth, person, ministry, life and death of the mysterious Immanuel, who was to preach the glad tidings of the gospel, work miracles, put away fin by the facrifice of himfelf, force a passage for us through death and the grave by his refurrection, and by his afcenfion into heaven lead captivity captive and receive gifts for men: And as all who should be glorified with him in his kingdom, must be sanctified, for this is the will of God, even our fanctification; foit behoved the same Jesus, who gave himself for us, to become also in us a principle of divine life by the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost: By taking the humanity upon him at his incarnation, he condescended to become our brother; but by making us partakers of his divine nature, he stands in the character of the second Adam, the father of a spiritual race, begetting us again to a lively hope, and fo bringing many fons and daughters unto glory. This was first manifested in the way of a publick dispensation on the day of Pentecost; a dispensation to continue throughout all ages of the church, for Christ

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Christ in us, the hope of glory, is the very earnest of that glory. This is that great mystery of godliness which distinguishes Christianity from all other religions in the world; and though it be the stumbling block of the proud disputer and conceited reasoner, yet to the true believer it is the wisdom of God and the power of God; nay to fuch a one this precious faith is a key to all other mysteries of religion, neither doth he stagger through unbelief, at reading that the flesh of Christ is meat indeed, and the blood of Christ is drink indeed, knowing that where there is a spiritual body, there is also a spiritual blood, the principle of spiritual life; and that this is as really and substantially derived to the child of the new birth from the fecond Adam, as the gross flesh and blood whereof we now partake, is derived to us from our first fallen progenitor through our respective parents: and herein confifts the difference which the apostle + makes betwixt those that are born after the flesh, and those that are born after the spirit, the latter being said to receive power from Christ to become the sons of God, and taking their denomination from their better nature, are styled born, not of (human) bloods, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God | . It is not then to the natural children of Abraham, nor to the circumcifion that is outward in the flesh, as the carnal Jew supposes, that the promise of the Messiah's kingdom is made, but to the children

[†] Galat. iv. 29. || John i. 12, 13.

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of his faith, to Christ's spiritual seed, Jews or Gentiles, who are appointed for the chosen generation to this inheritance; nor indeed is it easy to conceive how a kingdom constituted and modelled according to the gross apprehensions of fuch a one, after the spirit of this world, could exalt the glory of God or the true dignity and happiness of the human race; for what are carnal men with their unsubdued passions and unrenewed nature, in their fullest enjoyment of this world's goods? what better than the brute beafts that have no understanding? Nay, how often worse, as being more proud, more earthly, more fenfual, more devilish, Hence it appears, that the faith of the Jews in general (for the inward and spiritual Jew is alway excepted) in relation to their Messiah and his kingdom, was not only grossly defective, but fadly debased and corrupted; and therefore his first humble appearance in the character of a suffering Saviour was an offence to them. He came unto his own, but his own received him not: Soit is, that at this day they expect him for the first time to appear in worldly pomp and majesty, to restore the kingdom to Israel, according to their own carnal fense of the matter, but not as the prophets have spoken; and as many of the Jews who were profelyted to the Christian faith in the earliest ages of the church, retained some of their first errors concerning Christ's reign on earth, so the Antichiliasts took advantage of their fond opinions, to charge all the Millennarians with them, in order to difcredit the doctrine itself as a Jewish figment,

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of which class was no less man than the learned Jerom, though candour and equity require that we judge of a doctrine according to the purest fense of it, and as it is held by the sound and not the unsound part of its professors; but it has ever been an artifice practifed by the great adversaries of truth, to sow tares among the wheat, that the good feed may not be owned, but the whole crop pass for tares; and thus the generality are deluded, as few know how to separate the precious from the vile.

As the credibility and truth of this doctrine is not to be tried by what some mistaken or ignorant men have held concerning it, but by what the prophets have spoken, so recourse must be had to their testimony which is full and clear to the point, where the mind of the reader is not tinctured with invincible prejudice against it. Now the prophets and apostles have in many places foretold that the Lord Jesus Christ will have a visible glorious kingdom upon earth in the great fabbatical age or fabbath of rest, and that not only transiently or figuratively, but expressly, with repetition and circumstance; and here the first circumstance to be remarked on, is the feat or locality of this kingdom, it is to be in nature restored to its primitive state of perfection, and after that glorification which followed upon his afcention, according to that declaration of St. Peter, Acts iii. " And he shall send Jefus Christ which before was " preached unto you; whom the heavens must " receive, till the times of the restitution of all

"things;" the word in the original (αποκαζας σαεως) fignifying a change of one constitution of things to another; and this the apostle before ver. xix. calls the times of refreshing (availuteus) (revification or renewing even of the animal life) and speaks of this comfortable change as the subject of prediction in the mouths of all the ancient prophets. St. Paul to the Hebrews chap, i. 6. speaks of this second mission of our Lord into the world to receive worship, even from the holy angels, giving us hereby to understand, that during this bleffed reign a communication will be opened betwixt the angelical kingdom, and the communion of Saints, and the vision of Jacob's ladder be realized in There is indeed a misrendering their favour. of the Greek text in the English translation of our bibles, which makes it run thus; And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, be faith, &c. But the learned Mede hath restored it according to the true grammatical fense of the original, thus; And when he bringeth in again the first-begotten into the world, he faith, And let all the angels of God worship The same apostle in this and the following chapter distinguishes betwixt the divinity and the humanity of Christ, and obferves that though with respect to the latter, in order to qualify him for his fuffering state, he was made a little lower than the angels, yet by virtue of the union of his human with his divine nature, and the glorious exaltation of the former in his regal state, he should thereinalso be of superior dignity to the angels, for that according to what x. e-

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what was prophecied of him, he should be crowned with glory and honour, and all things put in subjection under his feet, but then this he refers to a future time, for fays he, we fee not vet all things put under him; but what other future time was that than this world of nature restored, in which he should erect his throne, the government of which is referved for him and not for the angels, as he faith, chap. xi. ver. 5. For unto the angels bath be not put in subjection the world to come whereof we speak: in which words it is to be observed, that the term our put is never used in Scripture to fignify any other world than this habitable region wherein men live, and therefore cannot be applied to the heavenly state.

St. Peter, 2 Ep. chap. iii. speaking of the first judgment by fire that should pass upon the wicked, to their destruction from off the face of the earth, mentions this world to come, rifing as it were from the ashes of the present into a new and more perfect constitution through the purifying operation of fire, in which, fays he, the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up; seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, &c. that this is not spoken of the consummation or final destruction of this elementary system appears from the next verse but one: Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteouineis,

cusnels, or wherein righteous men shall dwell. Besides, the word Aubyoovas (shall be dissolved) does not fignify a total abolition of their formal effence, but their being freed or fet at liberty from some adventitious impediment or imperfection, the same word being used by St. Luke speaking of the woman that was loofed by our Saviour from the bond of infirmity, by which the had been bound by Satan for eighteen years; now if this interpretation which I think will appear a just one, be allowed me, then the being diffolved here spoken of will mean no more than that the elements through the feparating and purifying virtue of the fire, will be released from that disorder and mixture of evil, which fin through the curse hath introduced into the creation; which exactly corresponds with St. Paul's doctrine on this subject, Romans viii. 20. where he fays, that the creation (n 2/1015) which was made subject to vanity, shall be delivered (set free) from the bondage of corruption. It is also further to be remarked in this passage of St. Peter, where he says, the beavens being on fire shall be diffolved, that we are hereby to understand the aerial heavens, or atmosphere as meant, not the starry heavens, much less the empyreal, for fo far the curse extended not; and that the word Heaven is often used in Scripture under this threefold distinction, is well known. Thus the empyreal is called the heaven of heavens the highest heaven,—the third heaven—the throne of God—the habitation of his holines the place where his honour dwelleth, and the hoft

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host thereof are the holy angels. 2dly, The flarry heavens are that expanse in which the planets and aftral bodies are placed, and is called in Scripture the firmament of heaven.— Thus in the Pfalms, the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work; of these heavens the stars are called the hoft. 3dly, The sublunary heaven, or heaven joined with earth, is used for the air: Thus the birds of the heaven and the fowls of the air mean the same in Scripture language, and the dew and clouds of heaven refer to the fame element: the visible host of this sublunary heaven are clouds and meteors, and the invisible host of spirits of different orders and kinds; and among these, evil spirits have their residence, we are told, in the same region, and that in the form of a government or polity, of which Satan is their head, being called in Scripture the Prince of the power of the air; and in these lowest heavenly places, they exercise the spirits of men with various temptations, nay even rule in the hearts of the children of difobedience. Thus Eph. vi. 12. We wrestle the against spiritual wickedness in high (it should not be rendered beavenly) places. The heavens , for then, which according to the prediction of the : the apostle, are to be dissolved, set free, purified inder by fire, are no other than the aerial heavens Thus of our atmosphere, which is at present so greatensly infected by the malignity of the curse, as —the through its multifarious impure mixtures, to esscontain in it the feeds of all corruption; if it d the stagnates, it becomes putrid; if in too violent hoft

a motion, it produces destructive storms and tempests; and it is moreover the vehicle of all poisons, so that if on the one hand, it is the support of life, it is on the other, the parent of death in various shapes; but when defecated from its heterogeneous and evil commixtures, and reduced by fire to its primitive temperature, it will not only become a principle of chearful health, and perfective of the animal life, and also serve as a purer medium for the transit of light, by which many unimagined glories in the rich furniture of the firmamental heavens may be laid open to our view, exhibiting an aftonishing display of the wisdom and power of God in the various aspects, motions, configurations, and harmonious acconomy both of the planetary and astral systems. The same fire, tempered by the plastic hand of its Creator, shall produce a like meliorating change in the earth, and its several productions of vegetables, minerals, and fossils; not destroying or impairing, but refining and exalting their natures, separating by a supernatural chymistry all adventitious fœculencies from matter, and causing every impurity to evaporate like the smoke of a caldron; and here the stars and planets shall join their friendly aid to tincture the several classes of bodies with their rich influences, adding fragrancy and fanative virtues to plants, gums and spices, the choicest flavours to fruits, lustre to the precious stones, delicacy of sounds to metals, and unspeakable beauty of colours to the variegated face of nature; and to compleat all, the divine Magia, the operation of

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the Most High in the heavenly physical powers, shall so dispose, proportion and harmonize the whole, that at the going forth of the almighty fiat, old things shall pass away, and all things shall become new.

The agency of fire in producing very wonderful changes in natural bodies is well known, whilft its own nature remains amongst the most inscrutable mysteries; it is perhaps the most simple and distinct of all God's creatures, and yet manifests itself in the greatest variety of forms and diversity, yea, contrariety of effects; it hardens and it liquefies, it dwells in the most compacted ice, as well as burns in the body of the fun; it is quiescent in the dark flint, and yet diffuses a world of light through the planetary fystem with incredible rapidity; it enters into all bodies, and yet is concentrated in its own incorporeal effence throughout the void of boundless space. Its operations are reducible to no standard, for it acts according to the kingdom in which it moves, and the subject it posfesses; in heaven it is a heavenly fire, and the principle of a joyous life; in hell it is a hellish fire, and the fource of torment; and in this mixt world of good and evil, it assumes more forms than Proteus—it flashes in the lightning, and faintly illumines the glow-worm's feeble lamp—it does the several offices of the laboratory and kitchin, and warms us by the confumption of our fuel — it destroys and preserves life, nay, it is the root of every life from the archangel to the pismire; and without it there neither G4

neither would be vegetation nor animality, no appetite, conjunction, fœcundity nor growth—in a word, it may be called in its ministry under the Omnipotent Artificer, the foul of the world, and the life of the creation, and coæval with his first works. No wonder then, we read that the instrumentality of this potent officer shall be employed to effect the divine purpose in the formation of a new world.

Inquisitive reason will be ready to start many questions and difficulties on this subject, as how the bodies of faints shall remain unhurt in the conflagration here spoken of; and whether there will be a new creation of brute animals to stock their kingdom; or the present generation of them be continued on for their use and entertainment, or for the display of the divine wonders, feeing fuch are spoken of in Scripture as existing, though all of an inoffenfive nature in this new state *: To this it might fuffice for answer, that the Lord well knoweth how to preferve both man and beaft, as heretofore the bush and the three children of the captivity, from the power of the fire; nor need we be solicitous how this shall be done, seeing every promise of God has omnipotence for its fecurity: befides, the paradifal fire by its fuperior energy, being only inferior to the divine fire, and manifestative of it in its kingdom, will so penetrate, tincture, and cover what is earthly in the bodies of the faints as to counteract all influence of the elementary fire, it being impassible with respect to its inferior, as

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also by a gradual process of its transmuting power so alter or rectify what is corrupt and impure in the animal part, with little or no fense of pain, as to change their vile bodies that they may be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body; (for even the children of the kingdom in order to their renovation must pass through a fiery trial, that all their wood, hay, and stubble may be confumed) and so in both these senses will that promise * of God to his people be fulfilled; "When thou walkest through " the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither " shall the flame kindle upon thee." But the children of the kingdom have also the trial of another fire to pass through, and that of a more fearching nature, for it is divine and spiritual, that so the iniquity even of their holy things may be purged; for where is the perfect man that is so without stain or spot as to have nothing in him that offendeth, that hath built only pure gold, filver and precious stones upon the right foundation, and hath neither wood, hay, nor stubble in all his building to. be confumed; now the fire shall try every man's work, of what fort it is ‡. To this double purification then by fires, we are bid to take heed, that so we may glorify the Lord in the fires +, or make manifest by higher degrees of purity, that we have been faithful stewards of the grace of God, in that day which shall declare it, because it shall be revealed (made known) by fire .

^{*} Isaiah xliii. 2. † 1 Cor. iii. † Isaiah xxiv.

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The false philosopher, and the bigot to a fystem will both mock at the doctrine of a purification of the foul by fire, as the Athenians did at that of the refurrection, * the latter drawing matter of ridicule from the figments of a Romish purgatory, unable through the darkness of his prejudice to separate betwixt truth and error; and the former from his falle definitions and distinctions of matter and spirit, whereby, under the negative term immateriality, he has learned to exclude all substantial forms and realities from spiritual nature, and fo banished every idea of heavenly things; though all principles and properties in this external world are only an efflux or an outbirth from the internal, having their archetypal forms, root and ground therein, according to the nature of the kingdoms whence they derive their originals, according to that famous axiom of the ancient adepts "Omnia cælestia sunt in terris, sed modo terrestri; omnia terrestria sunt in cælis, fed modo cælesti; i. e. all heavenly things are found on earth, but after an earthly manner; and all things on earth are found in heaven, but after a heavenly manner: and therefore to affert a heavenly materiality as well as an earthly, is no new doctrine. Where our Lord fays -" Except a man be born of water and of the " Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of "God;" it would be a gross misinterpretation of the words to understand by them, a birth from our common elementary water, which

^{*} John iv. 14. and vii. 39.

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has nothing in it adapted to the nature of the foul: but if hereby be meant a holy, pure and spiritual water, which is so suited to its essence as to become therein a principle of divine life through the operation of the Spirit of God, here the sense of the words, whatever difficulty may attend our conception of the thing, offers no violence to the understanding: now such a living, satisfying water our Saviour speaks of as the gift of God *. This does by no means tend to supercede the outward ordinance of baptism, but gives to it its proper rank of a facrament or outward viible fign, the elementary water being the symbol and nearest emblem in nature of the heavenly water; as the outward bread and wine in the other facrament represent the fpiritual body and blood of Christ which are the foul's true nourishment. Nothing should be erris, lightly esteemed in religion because it is excælis, ternal, for we must glorify God in our body s are as well as in our spirit : besides, as far as it is nner; an exercise of faith, humility or obedience, so far it has respect to the internal, and is accept-to as ed of God, not for the matter of the service arthly, but the disposition of the doer: and therefore the true spiritualist will walk hand in hand of the with his weakest brother through the lowest dom of forms and rudiments of religion, and take etation comfort in this exercise of his charity for the which grow thereby, and both be built up in love:

^{*} John iv. 14. vii. 39.

but the great and common danger lies in placing religion in the mere external service, with out respect to the inward disposition, or to God, the great object of our worship; for so all our services, however specious, however pompous, however multiplyed, are no better than founding brass or a tinkling cymbal, yea, than abomination; and therefore to all such worshippers God saith: I will spread the dung of your solutions upon your faces *.

And as there is a cleanfing by water, fo also is there a purification by fire, and by this double baptism operating in repentance and fanctification, are the fons and daughters of God made meet for glory, for every christian facrifice, the heart of every devout worshipper, must be salted with fire +. It was this inward heavenly fire that our Saviour came to fend on earth t, and to baptize his own with, and the publick manifestation of it under the emblem of elementary fire, declared the opening of the spiritual kingdom, or true gospel dispensation, on the feast of Pentecost. The facrifices under the law, and the descent of fire from heaven on certain occasions to consume them, in token of the divine acceptance, do point to this inward purification by fire on the altar of the heart, to kindle therein the holy fire of divine life and love, by the confumption of all false loves and every idol which usurps the place of God in his temple, which temple we are

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^{*} Mat. ii. 3. + Mark ix. 49. ‡ Luke xi . 49.

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are §. The painful experience of this fire of the refiner in the inward spiritual senses, when he comes to consume the filthiness of our corruptions, and to cast our reprobate filver and tin into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it *, is well understood of those whom the Lord hath dealt with in this way of fevere, but loving correction. It was this fiery trial that pinched fob to the quick, brought him down from his altitude of felfcomplacency in his own righteoufness (though allowed of by God for his justification outwardly before men) and made him to fee and to confess his vileness before that God who trieth the hearts and reins, and in whose fight the very heavens are not clean. David, that chosen fervant of God and man of afflictions, became Holy David only through the fanctifying operation of this divine fire, which indeed he thoroughly experienced, and gives a lively defeription of: his other trials and troubles, which were many, he compares to deep waters, floods and florms; but this sharp inward discipline, to the pains of hell burning up his bowels like a firebrand, and caufing his heart in the midst of his body, to be even as melted wax. O how did he groan and roar through the disquietness of his heart, when God fet before him in full view the account of his fins, with his numbring the people, his adultery and murder at the head of them; and how great was the anguish of his suffer-

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^{§ 2} Cor. vi. 16. * Ezek. xxii. 20.

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ings, when to this pile of much wood the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, was applied to kindle it, though in effect (by these rods and scourges, this salting with fire) to put away his offences, to make him a clean heart and to renew a right spirit within him. The foul has its spots and real defilements as well as the body, and must have a fuitable cleanfing also; nor is the evil of fin conceived and formed in the mind, fo unfubstantial a thing as many suppose: there is a higher philosophy than what is generally received that teacheth this, however it may be derided by that which is mechanical and excludes all reality of substance from every thing that carries not in it the known properties of gross matter; and yet the power of the mind to produce substantial forms may be illustrated by the effects of defire and imagination in pregnant women, manifesting themselves visibly and palpably on the bodies of their offspring by various marks and formations commonly known.

God, in Scripture, is represented to us under the name and property of love, and also as a consuming fire; now, though these seem opposite characters, yet in him they are one and the same, for the divine nature is simplex duntaxat et unum. When God manifests himself from the unsearchable deep of his hidden essence, as a fire of divine love, he communicates of this persection to all his creatures in their different kingdoms, according to their several natures and degrees of receptivity, making his angels the

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angels loving spirits, and his celestial ministers (the glorious Seraphim) a flame of fire; and he sheds abroad the same heavenly principle of love, by the Holy Ghost, in the hearts of his children here on earth. But then as this holy element is of an active and penetrating property, striving to assimilate and convert its subject into its own nature, it must act with violence, as a powerful separator, where it meets with contrariety or obstruction: now all malignity of fin is in the greatest hostility with it, and therefore must be consumed by its superior energy, which cannot be effected without very painful fensations in the subject of its operations, and may be compared to the pain of cauterizing an ulcer, tearing off pitch-plaisters from the flesh, or separating a limb by amputation. The hellish fire, which is the tormenting life of evil spirits, being wholly void of the love-property, is by natural antipathy most contrary to the divine fire, nor able to endure its operations, infomuch that the presence of our Saviour was more intolerable to the devils mentioned in Matt. viii. than their own hell, which caused them to fay; "Art thou come "to torment us before the time?" nay, man in his unconverted state is little able to bear any great degree of it, as appears by what Peter suffered when he said; "Depart from me, "for I am a finful man, OLord;" and the same is felt in a degree every day by conscious finners when in company with holy persons: hence it is, that our Lord is graciously pleased so to graduate and temper the process of our puria

purification, as we are able to bear it. This affimilating and converting power in the work of regeneration, has its outward emblem in the operation of our material culinary fire on the wood that serves it for fuel: it seizes penetrates and kindles it; it separates the humid parts by smoke or despumation, and breaks open its firmest cohesions, to set at liberty the imprisoned congeneal element; it then, with augmented force, overcomes all refistance, it rages, blazes and burns, till it has transmuted all that is convertible into its own effence, rejecting the extraneous matter; and then withdraws into its hidden fource. Were the wood endued with fense, it would have correspondent fensations to every act of the fire, and its pain would be in proportion to the refistance it makes to its operations, till becoming on with it by the confumption of itself, it would be at rest, and incapable of suffering any farther from it. Just so the divine fire; it wounds only to heal; it blackens in order to purify, and kills to make alive: thus God is love in the very act of his being a confuming fire: were there nothing in us to be destroyed, he would no longer be a consumer, but a bleffed fire of divine life, light, love and glory. The Rev. Ma Richard Clark in his Feast of Trumpets, p. 12 speaks of this regenerating work of the spirit in the following masterly manner: " Every " one born of the woman under the law of " death, must have his divine birth of God " opened in him, through the compressing "drawing and anguishing operation of God

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" which is the way through tribulation into the "kingdom of heaven: and it does not fo "much regard outward troubles, wants and " persecutions (which make no part of the cross " of Christ to those whose condition removes " them from these trials) as it signifies the inner " and frait paths, where the foul fuffers the "purifying vengeance of the fiery judgment " of God, which is more or less tormenting, "longer and shorter in its terrors and painful " strokes, as the mind and heart gives up faster " or flower its false will and its fins, to be flain, " crucified and burned away by the fire of his "jealoufy. And these inward purifications in " Abraham's smoking furnace * are very dif-"ferent as the hearts of men are fo, and may "be often repeated according to the backflid-"ings of the children: let both the spiritual "and the babes in Christ beware of presum-"ing, or thinking themselves safe, when they " have passed through the flaming sword once "only." nere is, there can be not you tion for its, but the gates of heaven are that

Here let the profane scoffer be warned of his danger who speaks evil of things that he knows not, turning into ridicule the office and ministrations of the Holy Spirit in a work of conversion or regeneration in the hearts of men fearing God, and believing in the power of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whether this office be in the way of comfort or distress, of building up or casting down; whether

* Gen. xv. 7.

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they are exercised with uncommon terrors, and under the buffetings of Satan for a feafon; or have that peace of God which paffeth all understanding, and are refreshed with unspeakable joy in the Holy Ghost. These things are of most serious and important consideration in their height and in their depth, as also every thing elfe that relates to that fundamental change and meetness for glory, which is called in Scripture by the name of the New Birth: a doctrine containing the substance and marrow of the Scriptures from beginning to end, and without which they have no fatisfying meaning. To effect this mighty change in the foul of man by his spirit, was the great end of Christ's mission, ministry, sufferings and death; for though the Holy Jesus had suffered a thoufand times upon the crofs for fin, yet if the Holy Ghost had not been given, and is not now given in as faving a manner as on the day of Pentecost, for our fanctification and being born again, there is, there can be no falvation for us, but the gates of heaven are shut with everlasting bars against us. To mock even at the natural infirmities and defects of our brethren, is so highly offensive to God, that it was punished with death in forty and two children by a judgment *; and should the Lord enter into judgment with our land for this fin, so common amongst us, what have we not to fear? But to mock at the spiritual sufferings of our brethren, when the hand of the Lord present them fore, and when he melts and

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tries them, to bring them by his sharp discipline, through the death of fin to a life of righteoufness; this denotes an evil spirit with a witness, and favours fo strongly of diabolism and the unpardonable fin, as must cause the ears of every Christian man to tingle, and spread horrour upon his foul: but know, profane mocker, whatever be thy character or dignity in this world, (for spiritual thou canst have none that is good) that for thee also (who now jestest upon these painfull though falutary operations of the Holy Spirit) there is a cup in the hand of the Lord, which is a cup of fury and trembling to all them that mock at his righteous judgments; and it contains the red wine of his fiery indignation, full mixt with every ingredient of his vengeance, and the ungodly scoffer shall be made to drink it up, nay and to fuck out the very dregs thereof. What though the sting be sharp that now pierces the tender conscience of the contrite penitent? what tho' the fire be hot which the returning finner is now passing through, in the course of his fore travail, that it may the sooner purge away his drofs, and confume every thing that offendeth? yet the Lord well knoweth how to support and when to deliver him, even when the refiner hath sufficiently purified his Levites, and purged them as gold and filver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness +. But there is also a furnace-work prepared for the men of this evil

† Mal. iii. 3.

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world, who now fport themselves with the afflictive experiences of the children of the kingdom, in their passage through the strait gate, whom the Pfalmist calls the sword of the Almighty; and a sharp sword they are in the fides of his poor fuffering fervants: but though now they go so merrily and jestingly on their way, and by their own defire, have their portion in this life, yet their bellies (their inward parts) are filled with that hid treasure of fire from the Lord, which (though for a time concealed and fmothered by the cares, pursuits and enjoyments of this world) must sooner or later burst forth into operation for life or for death.—May the good Lord in mercy vifit all fuch with his loving corrections, and drive them by those terrors, which they now despife or ridicule in others, to seek and know and feel the things which belong unto their peace, before they are for ever hidden from their eyes!

Did the doctrine of a new heavens and a new earth rest solely on the testimony of St. Peter, that might well suffice for its credibility, but he appeals to God's promise by the mouths of his prophets for the antiquity and truth of it; and therefore, if he had received no revelation on this point himself, his sense of the prophecies on this subject must be our rule whereby to interpret them: and here, among many prophecies, parables, sigures and allusions throughout the Scriptures, Isaiah, as the mouth of God, expressly reveals it; thus, ch.

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lxv. Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. And ch. lxvi. For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed, and your name remain: And St. John fays, Rev. xxi. I faw a new beaven and a new earth, for the first beaven and the first earth were paffed away: In ver. 2. he speaks of the new Yerusalem coming down from heaven : ver. 3. of the tabernacle of God with men, and his dwelling with them : ver. 4. of his putting away death, pain and forrow: and ver. 5. feals all with this folemn confirmation much to be noted: And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold Imake all things new: and he faid unto me; Write, for these words are true and faithful. So that the end of God's renewing the face of the earth evidently appears to be, for a glorious habitation of the Saints under Christ the king of Saints, that the Lord God may dwell among them, according to that prophecy of Daniel *: The greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the Saints of the Most High. And happy indeed are all they who (at the founding of the feventh angel, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ +) shall have their lot with the four and twenty elders and the rest of the redeemed, to be made kings and priests, and to reign with him on earth ¶. great variety of particulars relating to the na-

^{*} Dan. vii. † Rev. xi. ¶ Rev. v. H 3 ture,

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ture, constitution, polity and glories of this kingdom, and the bleffed condition of its inhabitants, are scattered through the writings of the prophets; nay, make a very confiderable part of their message; as that they shall be all righteous and holy, and live in perfeet peace, beating their spears into pruning hooks, and learning war no more: that all fierceness and noxious qualities shall be removed from the brute creatures, and the absolute dominion over them restored to man, infomuch that a little child shall lead the lion, and play on the hole of the asp; nay, the most oppofite amongst them, as the wolf and lamb, the leopard and kid shall feed and lie down together in fearless peace: that there should be no more malignity or distemperature in the earth, elements or feafons; that the fruits of the earth should be excellent, or not liable to corruption; the ground not fail to give her increase, nor the heavens their dew: that the Lord's people should possess all these things, and be bleffed, and that their fasts should be turned into joy and gladness, and chearful feasts: that the heavenly bodies should shine with augmented glory, the moon as the fun, and the light of the fun be feven-fold; and yet that their increased lustre would be as nothing compared to the brightness of the blessed King's personal glory, at his coming to reign in Zion, and to be the light of the holy city of God: la a word, that all shall be harmony and friendly agreement, love, joy and peace between God and men and all creatures: for these and many other

other particulars of this glorious reign, more especially the following chapters in Isaiab and Zechariah [If. ii, iv, xi, xxiv, xxxii, xxxv, lx, lxii, lxv. Zech. viii, xiv.] Ezekiel and St. John in the Revelations are particular in the description of the new Jerusalem, that city of the great King, where the Lord will reveal himfelf with more conspicuous manifestations of his royal presence; and the latter specifies the glories of the place, its foundations, walls and gates, as made of the richest materials in nature, as precious stones and transparent gold; and both speak of the river of God issuing from the throne, and the tree of life bearing fruits on each fide of the river of pure and healing waters, &c. It is commonly objected, that this description must be figurative in whole or in part, as where it is faid, that every feveral gate of the city shall be of one pearl, &c. Be it answered, that figures imply realities, otherwife they would be but figures of figures, which is contrary to the rules of all language: besides, the superior excellency of things in nature exalted and glorified, can only be represented to us by such images, or the compounding of fuch images as nature in her prefent state of degradation doth furnish us with: and though it be allowed, that there are some mystical allusions belonging to this description of the new Yeru/alem both in Ezekiel and John, which for want of types in nature more nearly corresponding cannot at present be more intelligibly explained; yet we must defire to be excused from giving up the substance of the H4

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prophecy, because of some unavoidable difficulties through the weakness of our apprehenfions, till the objector shall supply us with fomething more fatisfying in the room of it. But wherefore all this studied opposition to a doctrine, which holds forth to us the joy of the whole earth, as if it were less worthy of our Saviour, or less credible and desirable by us, that he should reign with his Saints in the new Jerusalem, than that he should be crucified betwixt two thieves in the old ferufalem, especially fince the prophecies of the former are even more abounding and more express than those which relate to the latter.

The learned Mede charges Jerom with unfair dealing in the translation he has given us of the prophecy of Tobit from the Chaldee, and has restored the text in a latin version from a pure edition of the Hebrew, wherein Tobit foretells, that after the return of the Jews from their captivity, they should build their temple, (but not according to its first magnificence) and remain at ferusalem for certain ages; and that after this, they should suffer by far the greatest captivity of all: which part of the prediction is left out in Jerom's version [which we copy after] as favouring the doctrine of the millenary reign; for if after their last captivity, or dispersion, continuing to this day, they shall again be gathered to Jerusalem, and the holy city be built gloriously &c. according to the following part of his prophecy; then this gracious promise remains yet to be

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The same author + inveighs sharply against that nefarious practice which so many have been guilty of, both in ancient and later days, of expunging and sophisticating such paffages in authors as make against their own particular tenets; and shews in particular, how this doctrine of Christ's blessed reign on earth has suffered by this wicked art, in the works of Justin Martyr, Irenaus, Victorinus Pictaviensis, and Sulficius Verus: and no wonder, that these authors should suffer in this manner, when, by a facrilegious combination of the Afiatic churches, during a great part of the fecond and third centuries, fuch wicked pains were taken to exclude the Apocalypse from its place in the canonical Scriptures, on account of the plain undeniable testimony therein given to this doctrine, it being notorious that the book of the Revelations scarcely treats of any thing else but this subject and things leading or referring thereto.

But if the locality and material glories of this bleffed kingdom are thus graphically described; so also the different privileges, offices and dignities of the Saints respectively that shall inherit it, are taken notice of: thus to some, it shall be appointed to fit on the right hand, to others on the left hand of Christ in his kingdom: some shall be crowned and sit on thrones; fome be rulers over many things, some over fewer; some be set over ten cities,

⁺ Mede's works, p. 533.

fome over five; fome fit at table with him. others serve; some follow him wheresoever he goes; others come from one fabbath to another, and from one new moon to another, and from year to year, to worship before him; for which in particular, see the places referred to beneath +. Now such distinction and subordination in the subjects plainly infer a polity and outward administration of government in our Lord's kingdom. It is well known that our Saviour taught much by parables or fimilitudes, in order to conceal the matter of his instructions from the mockery of profane scoffers; and that they only might understand them who were fit to receive them, and difposed to be the better for them: now the greater part of his parables have their true interpretation both according to the letter and spirit, and point as well to his kingdom of glory in this world as to the inward kingdom of his grace in the heart, the latter being the true preparation and qualifying work for the former. The feast made by the king for the marriage of his foo does by this fignificant emblem figure the joyful folemnity of that alliance which Christ will enter into with his church at his fecond coming: he was betrothed to the human nature at his nativity: he came and hath fent to invite all to the marriage, and is even now intimately present with his beloved ones in the fellowship of his Spirit; but the

† Matt. xx. 23. Luke xix. 17. and xxii. 30. Rev. xiv. 4. If. lxvi. 23. Zech. xiv. 16.

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full accomplishment of this union in all the bleffed fruits and effects of it, is referved for that happy period, when he who was heretofore a man of forrows, shall be anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows in the fight of his Saints; and when the king's daughter, the church with her numerous goodly train, all glorious within and all glorious without, shall be brought unto him, and with joy and gladness enter into the king's palace: and accordingly the same image of a marriage is used by St. John *, where speaking of the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven, or the holy city of holy fouls born again by a heavenly birth from God, he describes her prepared as a bride adorned for her husband: Behold, fays he, the tabernacle of God is with men, and be will dwell among them; not as heretofore in difgrace and affliction, but in dignity and honour, his humanity glorified by his divinity. The same advent is likewise represented to us in the gospel, by the parable of the nobleman who went into a far country, committing different talents to his fervants, and charging them to occupy or improve them till his return +: as also by that of the other master who made a great supper and bade many ||. Those other parables of the grain of mustard, and of the hid treasure, and of the net cast into the sea, have likewise their reference to the glory as well as grace of the Saints, pointing to the kingdom of regenerate nature, a

^{*} Rev. ii. † Luke xix. | Luke xiv.

treasure concealed at present and little known of men, though really existing in its paradisal root and principle, and now growing up towards its manifestation at the time appointed of the Father; and then the good fishes caught in the gospel-net, and now preserved in vessels, shall drink of the water of life, according to that figure of Ezekiel, in the vision of the holy waters *: "There shall be a very great " multitude of fish, because these waters shall " come thither; for they shall be healed, and " every thing shall live whither the river com-" eth." To this fecond glorious appearing of Fefus Christ on earth, the enlightened and zealous, and therefore persecuted Antonia Bourignon applies the fong of the Bleffed Virgin as follows: "What ground would the Bleffed "Virgin Mother have had for finging the " magnificence of her fon and Saviour, who " should be born poor and despised in the stable " of Betblebem, and perfecuted in his tender "infancy? what ground for rejoycing to fee "him imprisoned, accused and condemned as " a malefactor, and at last hanged upon a cross "in her presence: his continual sufferings " were a fword of forrow which always pierc-" ed her heart: it must needs be then, that "her joy proceeded from a prophetick spirit " in feeing that future time when he would ap-" pear on earth in glory, when all genera-"tions would call her Bleffed; which is not " yet come to pass; for among the few that

* Fzek, xlvii.

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" praise her amidst so many nations, how "many offend her by their idolatrous wor-" ship; nor would Christ himself allow her " to be called Bleffed merely on account of "her relation to him after the flesh: and "therefore it was in a prophetic view of his " glorious kingdom, wherein the faw that her "joy would be accomplished, and that her " Spirit should rejoice in God her Saviour. " will be then that he shall cast down the migh-"ty from their feats and exalt the humble, "which has never yet been effected; for fince " the coming of Jesus Christ the mighty have " exalted themselves as much as ever, and the " humble have hitherto been rejected and def-" pifed *."

The book of Psalms has always been allowed both by the Jewish and Christian churches to be a code of divine prophecy, for not only David, but Asaph, Haman and Jeduthan, who were the authors of feveral of them, were of the order of prophets; and we may justly conclude the same of such others of them as are incerti authoris: now one main subject of the Pfalms, and that which chiefly bears the stamp and characteristic of prophecy, confists in predictive declarations and descriptions of a glorious, happy state of God's church and people upon earth, when the Lord shall reign and make his glory to appear in Sion, which

^{*} See her treatife called The Light of the World, Conf. XXVIII.

will then be the joy of the whole earth; when he shall build up Jerusalem, and gather together the outcasts of Israel; nay, shall have the heathen for his inheritance and reign over them, for that the princes of the [heathen] people shall be joined to the people of the God of Abraham, so as to form one church see in particular Pfalm vxlvii and lxxii.] That God will establish the seed of his David shis beloved, his Christ for ever, and his throne from generation to generation, even as long as the fun and moon endureth [Pfalm lxxxix.] according to his oath and covenant: That in this reign of God, the Saviour, mercy and truth shall meet together, and righteousness and peace shall kiss each other; and that this seat of his kingdom hath been prepared for him ever fince the world began [lxxxv.] That in it the righteous shall flourish and prosper in the earth, the true of heart be glad, and nothing be withheld from the godly, for that the ungodly shall perish, and the horn of their power be broken, and the meek-spirited possess the earth, and the men of the earth be no more exalted against them [xxxvii.] These were the times, the dwellings, the tabernacle, the temple of God with men that the Psalmist longed for, panted after, and wished to be a doorkeeper in, and not an outward building of brick or stone, that he might go to church (as we term it) for furely king David could not want convenience or opportunity for that. These and a hundred other particulars relating to the future bleffed reign of Christ on earth, through-

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throughout the Pfalms, were written, as he tells us, for them that should come after, and for a people that should be born, to praise the Lord [cii.] And to this joyful state it was, that his prayer in Pfalm cvi. had respect: "Re-"member me, O Lord, according to the fa-" your that thou bearest unto thy people; that "I may fee the felicity of thy elect, and rejoice " in the gladness of thy people, and give thanks "with thine inheritance." That this could not be meant of the times when David lived, is plain from the unpromising state of things in his days, and from his many and grievous complaints of the overflowings and triumphs of ungodliness, the blasphemies and atheism of the multitude, and the oppressions of the poor and needy; and when the righteous were to far from inheriting the land, and the generation of the faithful from being bleffed with riches and plenteousness, that the adversaries of the Lord every where lifted up their banners, in token of their superiority in number and power, eating up his people as it were bread, infomuch that he often calls out upon the Lord, to rife up and defend their cause, and maintain his own honour in the earth: nay, the prosperity of the ungodly and the tyranny of the wicked were at fuch a height, that the fight of it staggered his faith, his footsteps had well nigh slipt into a distrust of God's providence, and he had utterly fainted, as he tells us, but for his belief and hope in a better state of things, when he should be one day raised up again to see the goodness of the Lord in the land

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land of the living. And if God's righteous fervants had fo hard a time of it in the days of David, true godliness was not likely to fare better in Solomon's reign, under the example of a king who fo foully lapfed into idolatry and finful indulgences, and to whose mal-administration is ascribed in Scripture the rending of the kingdom so soon after his death, by the revolt of ten tribes from the house of David. We read indeed of riches abounding in his reign, and of the great magnificence of the king; but it does not follow that things went any better with godly men on this account; for as fuch cannot fet their hearts upon gold and filver, nor even in their necessity feek to acquire them in the ways of the world, fo neither is it their lot, under any reign, to come in for any great share of such riches. How it went with the Jews afterwards, we may learn from their history and prophets, in the sad accounts they give us, of their evil kings, of their backslidings, hypocrify and rebellions, and their punishment by wars, captivity and other calamities, from which they had little rest; and when they had, they did evil again *, fo that if we confider their ingratitude under distinguished favour, their disobedience and their punishments, from their origin down to this very day, they will perhaps appear to have been as stubborn and suffering a people as any upon the face of the earth: nor shall we be able to find any one period of their history,

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^{*} Nehem. ix. 28.

wherein the bleffings of the covenant which God made with Abraham, Isaac, and facob have as yet been fulfilled to them as a nation in any satisfying sense of the promises; nor do they themselves pretend so much, but look forward for their accomplishment, whilst they remain ignorant of that Saviour who is already come, and shall come again to be the glory of his true Israel (the Jew and Gentile of the inward circumcision) in his blessed kingdom, after saving them from their sins by a sound conversion through that repentance and saith which are in Christ Jesus.

As the Pfalms foretel a future happy state of the church on earth, fo do they describe the present evil state of the world; and if we compare times with times, we shall find the cause of complaint much the same now as then, as the tyranny of men in power, the prosperity of the wicked, the troubles and persecutions of the righteous, the profaneness of the ungodly, the fcornfulness of the wealthy and the despitefulness of the proud: Thus as in a glass they shew us things past, present and to come: But if we reject their testimony to that triumphant state of the church, when its warfare shall be ended, when the Lord shall turn away the captivity of his people, and godliness shall have the upper hand; in this case it may said, that they promife bleffings to God's fervants which never yet had their accomplishment, nay, which they are not to look for; they fet forth real evils,

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evils, and only an imaginary redrefs of grievances; they speak of a righteous administration in Christ's kingdom on earth which is never to take place on earth; and in a word, are fo far from inditing any fuch good matter as they feem to hold forth, that they only comfort us with deceitful promises and vain hopes. For want of believing in the reality of fuch temporal bleffings to be dispensed in due time. it is, that the generality read and fing the Pfalms in the daily fervice of the church all their life long to fo little improvement, and without being more affected with the precious promifes therein recorded: hence, that the most respected of our commentators on this portion of facred writ have given us fuch jejune and inept interpretations of many of the Psalms, accommodating important prophecies to trifling, historical events in David's family, or to transactions of no general concernment to the church of God: and hence, that political churchmen have so often complimented kings, by applying to revolutions or circumstances of their government such of the Psalms as expressly refer to the personal reign and kingdom of Christ, as if the g'ories of the Saints, the peace of Sion, and the prosperity of Jerusalem were events referved by providence to diltinguish and dignify their administration; and the same compliment is ready for any other that shall step into their place: But the thanks giving is appointed; the pfalms and leffons are pressed into the service, and the people real them, and so all passes; and well would it be

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sometimes, if it might pass for nothing, and not for a solemn mockery. Such profane tampering with the Scriptures is no light matter, but of weighty offence; and better perhaps were it, if human compositions only were appointed for what respects such particular occasions, to guard against the like misapplications.

One reason why those prophetic parts of the Pfalms which point out the happy times of the Meshab's kingdom on earth, are so little noticed and acknowledged, is because of their being mixed with other matter of a different nature, and not professedly treated of in the way of methodical coherence, but raptim and in a defultory manner, like the flying touches of a masterly hand upon a musical instrument; it being the usual way of the Holy Spirit, by these sudden lapses of divine influence, to feize the subject of its operations, and transport it to the matter of prophecy all of a sudden; an instance of which we have in Michaiab *, who, from mocking Ahab and his false prophets, is immediately transported to the prophetic vision, and breaks out: " I saw " all Israel scattered upon the hills as sheep that "have not a shepherd," &c. So likewise here: the beginning and end of the same Psalms oftentimes look different ways, and carry in them a seeming contradiction, whilst the inspired writer in one part complains of judgments, and

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in the other fings of mercies: to instance only in two out of very many, viz. the tenth and eighty-ninth: in the former, the author complains of the oppressed condition of God's poor servants, and the triumphant state of the wicked, down to the 18th ver. when the Spirit of Comfort represents to him in vision the state of things reversed under the administration of the Messab's future government, upon which he changes his note all on a fudden: "The Lord is king for ever, and the heathen " (the ungodly) are perished out of the land: "Lord, thou hast heard the defire of the poor," &c. In the latter Pfalm we are presented with a fong of praise, describing the glorious exaltation of the Messiab in his kingdom upon earth, down to the 37th ver. when the transporting view of that joyous dispensation vanishes all at once, and leaves the Pfalmist under mournful complaints on account of the forrowful, fuffering state of God's children and fervants, continuing on till the commencement of the forementioned period. We fadly miltake the meaning, and lose much of the benefit of these inspired writings, when we apply them, as is usually done, so much to the reign and personal circumstances of the typical David, in which we are so little concerned, and not to Christ the true David (beloved) and to the things of his kingdom, of which they were only a figure, and wherein we are fo nearly concerned; as also when we judge of the inspired writings by the common rules laid down by man's art of grammar and criticism, win all those me on.

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which are no laws to God, whose ways and thoughts are not as ours, neither doth he teach as man teacheth. The pious and learned Mr. Smith, mentioned before in this work, has observed folidly on this subject t, whose wife remark I shall here give at full length, as it cannot fail of giving pleasure to the intelligent reader: " For "the better understanding all prophetical writ, "we must observe that there is sometimes a " feeming inconfistence in the things spoken of, "if we examine them by the strict logical "rules of method: we must not therefore in "the matter of any prophetical vision look for "a constant methodical contexture of things " carried on in a perpetual coherence. " prophetic spirit doth not tye itself to these "rules of art, or thus knit up its dictates fyf-"tematically, fitly framing one piece or mem-"ber into a combination with the rest as it "were with the joints and finews of method; " for this would rather argue human and arti-"ficial contrivance than any inspiration, which "as it must beget a transportation in the mind, " so it must spend itself in such abrupt kind " of revelations as may argue the prophet to "have been inspired: and therefore Tully de " Divinat. judiciously excepts against the au-"thenticity of those verses of the Sybils which "he met with in his time, because of those " acroftics and fome other things which ar-" gued elaborate artifice and an affected dili-" gence of the writer, and so indeed non furen-

\$ Select Discourses, p. 270.

"tis erant sed adhibentis diligentiam, as he " speaks. Lumen propheticum est lumen abrup-" tum, as was well noted anciently by the Jews; " and therefore the masters of Jewish tradition " have laid down this maxim: non est prius " et posterius in lege; we must not seek for " regular concatenations of things in the law, " or indeed in any other part of prophetical " writ. There must be some kind of Mana " in all prophecy, as Philo tells us; for when " divine light ariseth upon the horizon of the " foul of man, his own human light fets, at " least it must hide itself under the beams of " the greater, and be wholly subject to the irra-" diations and influences of it." What enthusiasm will this be called by our modern stiff opposers of every thing in religion that is not according to the standard of their supposed infallible reason!

To this temporal reign of Christ on earth here afferted, it may be objected, that both the Psalms and the prophets, from which we draw our proofs in support of this doctrine, do in many places speak of this kingdom as lasting for ever: thus, in Psalms xlv. where the exaltation of Christ in his kingdom by the Father is spoken of, and the words quoted to the same purpose by St. Paul, Heb. i. it is said: Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: and where Daniel, chap. vii. speaks of the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven to be given to the people of the Saints, he adds; whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, &c.

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And confequently, the kingdom here spoken of cannot properly be meant of a temporal But however this objection may have reign. its apparent weight with common readers, it vanishes at first fight before those that are but a little versed in the original languages of the Scriptures; as it is well known that neither the Hebrew word Gnolam, nor the Greek word aiwis translated for ever, do mean an unlimited eternity, according to the scholastic definition of the word, but only an uninterrupted continuance of any thing during the existence of the person, dispensation or period referred to: thus, the Hebrew servant that refused to use his privilege in taking the benefit of release on the fabbatical year, but chose rather to live on with his master; in that case, his master should bore his ear, in token of his consent to perpetual service, and he should be bis servant for ever *, or to the end of his life: as touching the passover it is said ‡, You shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations: you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever; where the meaning of for ever is explained by the foregoing words, throughout your generations, i. e. from age to age so long as the Mosaic economy shall last: so likewise Moses to the Graelites +, Thou shalt keep his statutes, &c. that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for ever; : and which can only mean during the time of their greatcontinuing a people here on earth, and not the neaven adds;

^{*} Deut. xv. 17. ‡ Exod. xii. † Deut. iv. 40. 14 eternity

eternity of the earth. We read that upon the founding of the seventh angel ||, there were great voices in beaven, Jaying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. The literal translation of which last words would be, to ages of ages, EIS TES always των αιωνων, nor does the adjective αιωνι fignify more: besides the apostle elsewhere in several places, affigns the period of a thousand years to this reign, which though lengthened to fabbatical or jubilé years, yet give a limited sense to the words for ever and ever: nor if these words were to be taken in the fense of infinite, would St. Paul be confiftent with himself, who speaking of Christ's reign, in Heb. 1. says, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; and yet in I Cor. xv. affirms, that when the end cometh, be shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, whose gift it was, that God may be all in all; and so the imperial, mediatorial reign of Christ shall perfect its period. Thus much may be fufficient for the difficulty before us; though indeed it is obvious enough, that words must take their precise meaning, from the nature of the subject to which they are applied; and that nothing would be more abfurd than to interpret any expressions in a sense of infinite duration, when applied to things existing only in a finite state: everlasting therefore, and words of like import, when used conjunctively with Christ's kingdom here on earth or things

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relating to it, denote no more than its stability and continuance through all ages of the world till time shall be no more, and then not to be destroyed, but swallowed up in higher glory, for it will be raifed and exalted into the kingdom of the Almighty Father, whose reign, in the proper metaphyfical sense of the word, is from eternity to eternity; fo that the kingdom of Christ will not so properly be dissolved as confummated, under another denomination, in the supreme Majesty and glory of the Father's kingdom, on this fide of which nothing can be called everlasting but in an inferior and limited fense, according to which the gospel is called in Scripture, the everlasting gospel *, meaning its being the last revelation from God publickly dispensed to mankind for falvation to the end of time; for when it has attained its end, all farther ministration of it must cease of course.

It is for want of distinguishing the different fenses in which the same word is more or less used in Scripture, that many fall into dangerous mistakes concerning doctrine, and hence that grievous errors are sometimes imbibed, and importants truths rejected: to instance only in these words kingdom of beaven: in their primary and highest fignification they mean the empyreal heavens where the Godhead manifests its supreme glories to the angelic host; thus, beaven is my throne and earth is my footfool ‡. Secondly, the kingdom of God, or the

^{*} Rev. xiv. 16. ‡ Acts vii. 49.

kingdom of heaven, is used in many places of the New Testament to fignify the kingdom of Grace wherein Christ reigns spiritually in the hearts of his fervants: thus, the kingdom of God is within you *; and this is the kingdom which is faid, not to come with observation: and thirdly, it means that supreme power and dominion which Christ at his second coming will exercise on earth, when he shall put down all authority (of men and evil spirits) and subdue all enemies under his feet #: in this kingdom the twelve apostles shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, even in the regeneration, or kingdom of regenerate nature, wherein the son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory +. In the second sense of these words (kingdom of heaven) Christ reigns in his Saints in the church now militant: in the third fense, Christ will reign with his Saints in the church then triumphant. They that reject the former fense deny every thing that is truly divine, fpiritual and faving in religion: they that reject the latter, deny all real manifestation and literal fulfilment of the material and visible glories of Christ's church and the inheritance of his Saints on earth, as testifyed of throughout the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament. Let it be added here, that Christ's glorious kingdom on earth may, in a proper fense of the words, be called the kingdom of heaven, as the administration of it will be under

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[†] Matt. * Luke xvii. 20. 21. 1 Cor. xv. 24. XIX. 28.

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the bleffed influences of the heavenly-spiritual, and the heavenly-physical powers, externally in glorified nature, and internally in the souls of glorified Saints.

What has been faid before in this chapter, touching the difference of place, privilege and dignity among the heirs of the kingdom, may ferve to obviate some objections, and to reconcile some seemingly contrariant passages in Scripture relating to the constitution of this kingdom and its inhabitants. Thus our Lord, in answer to that question of the Sadducees concerning marriage *, answers thus: In the refurrection (the first resurrection of the Saints) they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven; and yet the prophets speak of multiplying and offfpring in the kingdom of the Messiah +, denoting hereby a continuation of the ordinance of marriage. St. John fays ‡, that in the time of this happy reign, there shall be no more death; and yet Isaiah, speaking of the same, says, The child shall die an hundred years old I, fignifying hereby that the longevity of men in those days will be such, that an age of an hundred years will be deemed but as the life of a child. The same apostle speaking of the new Jerusalem, says, that the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the Lamb is the light thereof §; and yet

^{*} Matt. xxii. 30. † Isaiah lxv. 23. Jer. xxx 19. 20. † Rev. xxi. 4. ¶ Isaiah, lxv. 20. § Rev. xxi. 23.

Isaiah says, The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun sevenfold, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound *. Now, these seeming repugnances will disappear when it is considered, that the things here spoken of have respect to persons in different conditions and relations, though subjects of the same kingdom. Thus the Saints raised from dead in their glorified bodies, as the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and martyrs, as well as others of inferior class, will be in a far different state of existence and glory from those who shall be found alive at the coming of our Lord, and shall also enter into his kingdom: the former having already passed the gates of death, shall die no more, but rise to a bleffed immortality; nor will the prefent ordinance of marriage be in any wife fuitable to their pure, celestial vehicles; but their gratifications and communications will be more refined and exalted; and yet neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord; but the male and female tinctures or properties are united, or made perfect in one, as in Adam before the division; and as in the holy angels, who are neither male nor female in distinction, but both in one. And as in the refurrection the Saints will exist in an order of nature superior to this elementary one in which we are placed, in comparison whereof our air and light are density

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and groffness; so their light and vision will be of much higher purity, through illumination from the splendors of the bleffed Redeemer's glorious body, as the planets in their feveral orbits are respectively enlightened by the sun; so they shall have their different degrees of clarity and brightness, as one star differeth from another star in glory. But as to those who shall be found worthy to partake in the joys of this kingdom before their mortal part is swallowed up of immortality, and perhaps none but the incorrigibly wicked and impenitent shall be excluded, it will not be altogether so with them, for their place is within inferior nature, but of inferior nature exalted and highly glorified to what it is now, for to them the light of the sun shall be seven-fold. These will go on to increase and multiply, according to the order of nature in which they stand, (and with the first bleffing on a happier kind of marriage) to build houses and inhabit them, to plant vineyards and eat the fruit thereof, being blessed in all they do, for as the prophet tells us in the same chap. (Isaiab lxv.) They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth with trouble, for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. But then as death is the lot appointed for all living, so when they have fulfilled their time, they must pass through this translation, though without pain or fuffering, to their higher glory; for at the founding of the last trump to the second refurrection, all shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; and then death, the

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the last enemy, shall be destroyed by the allvictorious Saviour; and what shall be the law of death to some before that consummation, we know not. W

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Bishop Hall, in a short tract called Reve. lation unrevealed, sets himself to refute the doctrine of Christ's personal reign on earth, but in so weak a manner, and by such frivolous queries and paradoxes of his own raising, that one cannot without concern, behold fo good a man, the author of fo many pious discourses and meditations, fay any thing so unworthy of himself; but his talent did not lye this way, and when great men go out of their province, they must fall short of themselves: besides, he was fo tyed and bound with Calvin's chain that he could not admit any thing that his master taught him to disbelieve; so dangerous a thing is it jurare in verba Magistri, and to fetter ourselves with a system upon any human authority whatfoever; and yet this is the pityable case of many excellent men, and one great bane of truth and charity in every church; they hastily seize upon the articles which they are to believe and defend as pro aris et focis, and then treat as herefy every thing which they find not within their own circle. above writer ridicules the belief of marriage in the circumstances before mentioned, as savouring strongly of a Jewish or Mahometan To give any thing an ill name fuited paradife. to vulgar prejudice, is a popular art of gaining the undifcerning multitude on our fide, who all-

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who generally take their measures of truth, not from any right standard of its soundness and purity, but according to the judgment they have formed of persons or parties; so that if you mean cunningly to difcredit any doctrine or truth with fuch as are children in understanding, call it Popish, Jewish, Turkish, or by any other name they diflike as much, and your bufiness is half done; for not being capable or used to distinguish, they immediately rank it in the number of confessed errors among the people of fuch a name: thus fome who bear no good will to our church, have endeavoured to cast an odium upon it, by calling her fervice popish; because some of her collects and usages are the same with those in the church of Rome; as if the people of that communion, because they hold fome things that are wrong, could neither pray nor do any thing that is right. allowed that Mahomet borrowed some of his doctrines from the Scriptures of the Old Teftament, and what if he disguised this of the Meshab's kingdom with carnal fancies, in order to recommend it the more to the liking of a sensual people, shall we give up a glorious truth with all its precious promifes, because he has defiled it with a mixture of errors?— God forbid, that we should thus put it in the power of our enemies to rob us of any part of the rich treasures contained in the Scriptures! Let us learn to exceed Turks in just and righteous dealing before we reproach them for their erroneous notions about paradife. The God and Father of all nations has divided portions

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of his truth, in different ministrations of light and clearness, according to his good pleasure. to every people upon the face of the earth; and though fome noxious weeds do, in every climate under heaven, mix and grow up with the good grain, yet wherever we meet with any of this heavenly feed, let us praise God for it and cherish it, having pity for the ignorance and errors of our brethren, remembering who it is that maketh us to differ. But why fo much objection to an ordinance of God (instituted in the time of man's innocence) being continued on in the time of man's restoration? There is confessedly, for the most part, too much of shame and impurity going along with it, through our diforderly passions, and the corruption of man's fallen nature, and yet it is pronounced honourable in itself, and a bleffing promised to the due observance of its laws: and what though it so often proves the source of discord and mifery; yet this is not the natural confequence, but owing to the abuse of the ordinance, or the perverseness of the parties, feeing that the true end and tendency of the institution is to promote godly fellowship and mutual comfort, and to prevent much evil in fociety; and therefore we ought to speak of it with reverence, whether we confider it as a divine appointment, or as the only lawful way which the God of nature hath ordained for the multiplication of his subjects in our present state: to the pure all things are pure and were every thing that is otherwise, separated from our ideas on this subject, it will be hard to fay

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fav what there is in the supposal of marriage (as far as human nature may then require and admit of it) more unworthy of Christ's kingdom than the innocent loves of little children; especially when we reflect that all things will then be fanctified by perfect purity and the love of God, for nothing that defileth shall enter there: So that there is little room for that mifplaced banter of our author on the "Saintscom-"forting themselves with the pleasures of bed "and board in this new kingdom;" and yetfure Ithink that the good Bishop believed that Adam and Eve were in a state of Saintship before the fall, and were comforted in like fort; why then should that be thought a difgrace in paradife reftored, which was none in paradife unforfeited? and how is that ordinance a proper subject of ridicule, which even in its present imperfection was honoured with our Saviour's presence, and is dignified with the fignature of an emblem of his mystical union with his body, the church? But here lay the root of the matter: The author's system reached no farther than Mr. Calvin's Institutes, and as he found nothing there beyond an imputed righteousness, so he could not conceive how human nature on this fide heaven could be cleansed from original, derivative corruption; as though the locality of heaven had any peculiar virtue in it to effect this change: In a word, he thought it not possible to be fruitful and multiply without being fruitful in multiplying finful creatures by a finful act, suppoling that all human creatures in every condition of humanity must of necessity be con-K ceived

ceived and born in fin, nay and live in it too. -Take his own words: "What! mortal and " yet finless? What man or angel can recon-" cile these two? What! all Saints and no hy-" pocrites? O happy kingdom, where there is " no taint of hypocrify! But shall men have 's hearts then? And are not the hearts of men " deceitful above all things? I had thought, " fays he, that the fruit of God's gracious " election had been the remission, not free-"dom from the commission of fin:" And towards the end of the same tract, he observes thus: " Certainly we must cease to be men " when we begin to be finless; for fin, though "it be not of the effence of our nature, yet "it is a proper and inseparable adjunct thereof, which we cannot hope to be quit of by "the most perfect regeneration." nothing less than the credit which this author is deservedly in for his piety could be a passport for fuch gross absurdities in divinity with the intelligent part of his readers; but where the votary has once subscribed to Calvin's Creed*, even the necessity of the Saints finning in the kingdom of the regeneration, may join hands with that of decretal reprobation, and both pass for two articles of faith. I shall reply briefly to the foregoing queries and affertions.

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^{*} Reverend Calvin, says he, whose judgment I so much honour, that I reckon him among the best interpreters of Scripture since the apostles lest the earth, &c. See the same Trast.

Where does it appear in Scripture, that mortal and finless are terms that imply a contradiction, or how does immortal mend the matter? for if Adam became mortal only through fin, then he finned being immortal, as did also the fallen angels. But if he introduced fin into our nature, is it not the office and promise of the second Adam to abolish it, and to become the parent of a holy race, that as in Adam all died, died to God and the divine life, fo in Christ should all be made alive, alive unto God through vital holiness and a participation of the divine nature; or is Christ's power less to heal and fave than Adam's was to wound and destroy? how then shall he be the restorer of all things, or what truth is there in those words - Thou hast destroyed theself, but in me is thy help. Is not Christ to subdue all enemies under his feet, and is not fin his greatest enemy? but the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, and therefore fin, the parent of death, shall be destroyed first. The sting of death, fays the apostle, is fin, but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, over what, but fin? Behold the Lamb of God, faith John the Baptist, who taketh away the sin of the world! Now what is this fin of the world but its apostacy from God, sin in its very root, essence and principle, which unless eradicated, the malady is not removed, but the bitter fountain will ever fend forth bitter water, the evil tree will continually bring forth corrupt fruit, and so after ten thousand remissions of sin there will be ten thousand commissions of it again, K 2 and

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and fo on, finning and forrowing, and repenting and finning again. But if the fountain must one time or other be purified, what is the time of doing this and where? In Heaven? All things there are already perfect, besides then Christ will have finished his kingdom and office: It remains then that the work be done here on earth, or in some future purgatory, or in paradife: Let the objector chuse which he pleases, it will suffice for the silencing his objection, though we here make choice of the last, as that bleffed state described by the prophet *, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughter of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the Spirit of judgment, and by the Spirit of burning (the purifying divine fire iffuing from the body of Christ) when he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and shall purify the sons of Levi +. Here at least the regeneration of Saints shall be perfected, and they be made free from fin, that they may have their fruit unto holines; shall be all taught of God; filled with the Holy Ghost; and joined unto the Lord in one Spirit: And sure this must be a finless state: and why not even in their mortal bodies, purified as they will then be, fo that they shall not be tempted to evil from this quarter; nor from evil men, for they shall have no fellowship with them; nor from Satan, for he and his shall be bound for a thousand years +. Nor do the prophets leave

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^{*} Isaiah iv. 4. # Mal. iii. 3. + Rev. xxii. 2.

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us under any doubt concerning this their state of purity; for thus faith Isaiab (chap. iv. 2. 3.) In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel: And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remainth in Jerusalem shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem. And elsewhere *: Thy people shall be all the branch of my planting, the work of my bands, that I may be glorified. Zephaniah likewife, speaking of this restoration of Israel +, fays: The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth. And again, Ifaiab lxii. 12. They shall call them the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord: And thou shalt be called Sought out—a city not forfaken. How ill do these declarations stand with the supposal of hypocrify and deceitfulness in the hearts of the Saints? and in what a poor low sense of the word must the author have held the doctrine of regeneration, to fay, that the most perfect kind of it gives us no hopes of being made free from fin? and yet if it be not a restoration of a righteous, innocent nature, how is shall it a regeneration? But he fays, we must cease to be men when we begin to be finless what then was Adam when he was finless; leave what was Christ in his inferior nature but a

^{*} Isaiah lx. 21. † Zeph. iii. 13.

finless man? Is not this to make fin effential to our nature not only fallen, but regenerated, nay in its most perfect state of regeneration? Beware, my dear readers, how you expect to find any true fatisfying explanation of our spiritual redemption in Calvin's Institutes, or in any other author who holds that no communication of Christ's righteous nature to man is ever to be expected from his most perfect regeneration; and that he can only put off his finful with his human nature: And yet God forbid, that I should seek occasion to discredit good Bishop Hall in the main of hischaracter, whose piety and writings (for the greater part of them) I truly reverence and recommend; But great errors are often found in great and good men, and therefore are the more to be marked out, as their authority is apt to affix a kind of fanction to them in the eyes of the undiscerning.

Though all the inhabitants of the bleffed kingdom will be happy as well as holy, yet in great variety of differences and degrees, according to their respective measures and qualifications, as one star differenth from another star in glory; and therefore our Lord saith, In my Father's house are many mansions; yet so, as that the lot of inheritance which falleth to the lowest, shall far exceed the highest good things in this world: Some shall rule and some shall obey; some shall minister and others be ministered unto; and from this sub-ordination, conducted through the whole occonomy

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nomy of the kingdom, with perfect fitness, alacrity, and exchange of the kindest offices, will refult unspeakable harmony, "Glory to "God in the highest, on earth peace, and " good will towards all men." This world, even in its present state of depravation under the curse, is as a glass through which we may read many things that shall be in that which is to fucceed it; and we might read much more, were it not for the dimness occasioned through fin; for it is a figure of things to come, in which the invisible things of God are knowable by them that do appear. In its diversity of climes and regions differenced in temperature, beauty and fruitfulness, it exhibits faintly an image of the various scenes of paradife, where the face of regenerate nature will have great distinction in its glories. Man, for the most part, is for having all things one way; but God, both in the kingdoms of nature and grace, manifests his wisdom and power in the unspeakable variety of his works; and for this may praises be given to his adorable goodness, who hath opened so many different doors of mercy for his poor creatures to enter into the joy of their Lord. Were it so, that only one certain measure of happiness and glory had been provided for the heirs of his kingdom, how many must have fallen short of it through their incapacity and unfitness? But now hath he taken care of the lowest in his kingdom of Grace, and, as it were, let down a ladder with many steps of K 4

bliss, that so his little and feeble ones * may find a portion in the Sabbath of rest: And in this I do and will rejoice for the hope that remaineth to the unworthy hand that now writes this; that even I also, though but the least in the kingdom of heaven, shall see the fair beauty of the Lord, and visit his Temple: Praise him sun and moon; praise him all ye stars of light!

If there be any plain meaning in the Pfalms and prophets to be come at by us, I think it must appear by the many passages thence adduced, in proof of the doctrine before us, that they do foretel a glorious state of the church, a happy time to come, when Messiah, the prince, the David of God, the Lord our righteousness, shall have a kingdom upon earth, the administration whereof shall be in righteousness, peace and truth; when he will maintain the cause of his poor fuffering fervants and exalt them to honour, and put down the rule and authority of the proud usurpers who now engross the bleffings of nature to themselves, and tread down the humble and meek as the mire of the streets; and when there shall no longer be any violence or war, no more iniquity and deceit in the earth, but peace and truth, love and joy shall flourish and abound so long as the moon But though the bleffedness, stability and extent of this kingdom are spoken of in

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in many of the Scriptures here quoted, yet the discovery of the time of its duration feems to have been referved for the beloved disciple, to be communicated by him to the church of Christ; and here, both the revelation of the kingdom and time of its continuance is made with uncommon folemnity, the former in Rev. v. the latter in Rev. xx. In the former the almighty Father is represented on his throne, holding a fealed book in his hand, whilft a ftrong angel proclaims a challenge to the universal world, asking, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? But none was found worthy: Upon which John weeps. One of the four and twenty elders comforts him, by declaring, that the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, had prevailed to atchieve the work: And thereupon, the Lamb that was flain came and took the book out of the right hand of him that fat upon the throne: This act figures more strongly than words can express, the authority and power inherent in our Saviour's divine nature, to open the dispensation of his kingdom, according to that declaration in the days of his flesh: Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, &c. * And that this act was declarative of fuch a power appears from this, that the four and twenty elders (reprefentative of the redeemed among the twelve tribes of Israel, doubled by as many from the

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^{*} John xvii. 24.

Gentile churches, under their respective heads, patriarchs and apostles) immediately sung a new fong, faying: Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou wall flain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood. out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priefts, and we shall reign on the earth. And upon this, all creatures in heaven and earth and in the fea, proclaimed bleffing and honour, and glory and power unto the Lamb, &c. So that upon the whole of the matter, this chapter in the Revelations feems plainly to exhibit a folemn scenical prefiguration of our Saviour's commission for the exercise of his regal power, fignifying, by the register of a book, God's counsel and decree to set his King upon his holy hill of Sion, and to give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession *; as the seals thereof denote the fignatures of its approach, stamped on the awful judgments that shall be the harbingers of the great King at his accession to his throne. Secondly, In the xxth chap, of the same book, a thousand years is the period affigned for the duration of the kingdom; and this literally expressed no less then fix times, relative to different circumstances of it. The prophetical vision here also opens with a striking solemnity: An angel descends from heaven having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand: he lays hold on the dragon, the old ferpent, which is the Devil and Satan, shuts him up

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and fets a feal upon him, that he may no longer deceive the nations till the expiration of the thousand years. The thrones are fet for them that had fuffered martyrdom, and had not received the mark of the beaft; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years; but the rest of the dead lived not till the end of the thousand years: This is the first resurrection, which plainly declares a fecond to fucceed it. Criticism must here be at loss, with all its subtlety and sophistry, to evade the force of a prediction so positive and circumstanced, and where no reason nor rule of interpretation will justify a departure from the literal sense of it, in respect to the reign of the martyrs with Christ, the duration of their reign, and the time for the rifing of the other dead being deferred till the end of it; especially as it clashes with no one article of the Christian faith, but greatly strengthens it, by giving clearness of interpretation to the many Scriptures which give evidence to the real future existence of such a kingdom, both in the declarative way, and also by prophetic vision; of which latter kind we have one fimilar and correspondent to the last mentioned, in Daniel vii. wherein "The Ancient of days, the eternal Father, is represented as sitting on his throne, and one like the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven is brought near before him; and there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him, and his kingdom should not be destroyed." And this part of the vision bears so near a resemblance to that

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that of St. John in which is mentioned the fealed book, that I think no doubt can pass on the foregoing interpretation of it. After Daniel had received the interpretation of the four beafts, as fignifying four kings or kingdoms which should arise out of the earth, it is added for the comfort of the church, in the next verse: "But the Saints of the Most High " shall take the kingdom, and possess the king-"dom for ever and ever:" But before the time of this victory, the horn in the head of the fourth beaft, having eyes, and a mouth fpeaking great things, whose look was more Rout than his fellows, should make war with the faints and prevail against them: But after this, the judgment should sit, and the faints should take away his dominion, and utterly destroy it; and " The dominion and the great-" nefs of the kingdom under the whole beaven, " should be given to the people of the saints of " the Most High, whose kingdom is an ever-" lasting kingdom," or, according to the foregoing explanation of this term here used, not to be destroyed or taken away, but to last to the end of ages, till time should be no more. This prophecy of Daniel concerning the judgment, and kingdom to be given to the faints, harmonizes in full agreement with that of St. John upon the same subject, except that the latter only affigns to its continuance the period of a thousand years: But whether this term of years is to be understood of common solar years, or of fabbatical years making 7000, or of years of Jubilees, amounting to 50,000;

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00; 10 or whether Thousand, being the most perfect number, may fignify any indefinite progression of centuries, is here made no part of enquiry but left to the judgment of those who are better skilled in the prophetic numbers; or till he who alone is worthy to open the feals of his mysterious book, shall give the interpretation thereof to fuch as he shall chuse to make the discovery by: Nor shall I attempt the explication of the four emblematical beafts, typical of the four kingdoms mentioned by Daniel, or of the agreement of the fourth beast in Daniel with those mentioned in the 13th and 17th chapters of the Revelations, which do certainly agree in their enmity and prevailing power for a feafon against the saints, as also in the sameness of their destruction by the Lamb, and the translation of their kingdom to his followers. These, as well as the character of the Whore of Babylon, have been applied almost unanimously by Protestant writers to Rome papal: And her cruel persecutions, as well as heraffectation and use of worldly power, do indeed denote her to have a large share in the application; and yet, to confine it to her only argues great partiality in the other churches in their own favour, that so they may the better shift off all charge of apostacy from themselves; whereas Babylon, considered as the outward manifestation of Anti-Christ mystical, though it may have a fuller visibility and difplay in one church or kingdom than another, yet in its principle it possesses the hearts of all that are enemies to the power of godliness in

the faints, however they may be restrained from perfecuting them openly: And therefore, as touching Babylon, it is faid; "That " all nations drink of the wine of the wrath " of her fornication *." Besides, it must be allowed, that as in the most corrupt visible church Christ hath faithful and holy servants; fo also, that there are many rotten members in the purest, who make no part of his body: Dr. Henry More, in his chapter called The Lamentation over Babylon (in which he more particularly exposes the corruptions in the church of Rome) among other marks with which he stigmatizes Babylon, he mentions the two following; first, her Anti-christian oppositions to the divine or spiritual life: "The " palpable and visible difference, says he, that " providence is to make betwixt the evil and "the good, will be fo wifely contrived, that "it shall not only be an undoubted revelation " of God's fovereignty in the world; but in " a special manner, for the high honour and "triumph of the divine over the animal life, " which through fo many forrows, afflictions, " temptations, scornful reproaches of the un-"godly, and their cruel and barbarous ufages, " shall at last, with all that embrace her, be " enthroned in everlafting peace and glory: "But fays he, there is one thing behind, " which is the turning of the church into a mart " or fair by collations of ecclefia frical preferments " for mere worldly and fecular interest; the "turning the exercise of Christian offices into

* Rev. xviii. 3.

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" a mere trade of gain for the priests of what " dignity foever: But the merchandise of such " dignities in their church shall fail them with "the rest of their pomp, in the ruin and " defolation of Babylon, even their great and "opime preferments, which their ambitious " and worldly minds so hanker after; for these " are the fat and fair objects that so make their " mouths to run a water in this full Babylonish "market, where every thing is to be had for "money, and nothing without it." Now, if these are some of the characteristics of Babylon at Rome, then may we conclude, that wherever men bearing the name of Christians (whilst void of that unction from the Holy One which is the true nature fignified by that name) think, and live, and love, and do as they do at Rome, there also is Babylon and the cup of her fornications.

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Many difficulties are often raised, and truth much perplexed, by restraining the sense of a subject to what is said of it in one verse or portion of Scripture, without attending to what is predicated of the same in other places; for it is not the way of facred writers, as was observed before, to treat their matter systematically, and according to the artificial methods of human composition, but as it were raptim et Jaltim, as the Spirit prompted them; and therefore Scripture should be explicated by Scripture, and things widely separated and distant in place, be brought together in one view, in order to give them clearness and confistency.

For

For want of this, some have restrained the saints of the first resurrection, mentioned Rev. xx. to the noble army of martyrs, who are there indeed distinguished as to precedence and priority in this refurrection, but not exclusive of many faints of other orders and classes; for if so, then Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the Bleffed Virgin also, would be excluded from reigning with Christ. Besides, as the Rev. Mr. Clarke * justly observes : " There is an " internal martyrdom of the heart, which will "doubtless be accepted to a place in the first " refurrection; and exemplary piety in a cor-" rupt world and a very corrupt age of it, is " oftentimes a trial flower, and perhaps harder "than any other martyrdom." But that the number of the first refurrection-saints will be of far greater extent than fo, is plain from Rev. xi. where it is faid, upon the founding of the feventh angel, "There were great voices in "heaven proclaiming the kingdoms of this " world as become the kingdoms of our Lord " and of his Christ, who should give reward " unto his fervants the prophets, and to the " Saints, and to them that feared his name, " fmall and great." And that the fame kingdom of our Lord is the subject here spoken of in this chapter, and also in Rev. xix. carried on through part of the xxth, is evident to any attentive reader: The voices in heaven proclaiming his advent and victory; the worship of the four and twenty elders, and the small

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^{*} Essay on the Number Seven.

and great that shall praise him in his kingdom, with other particulars relating to the folemnity of his accession, answer to one another as Cherub to Cherub on the mercy feat.

Another circumstance here to be noted with respect to this kingdom is, that it will be a time of judgment as well as of government and great joy; and the Saints who shall judge the world * shall be also judged themselves: The best will have something to be ashamed of and forry for, and cause enough to confess, that not any merits of their own, but God's mercies and Christ's merits have advanced them to this honour; and that the bleffed lot of their inheritance is by no means of debt, but all of gift and free Grace: Nor is it to be doubted, that even the apostles themselves, who shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Ifrael, shall first take their turn in the judgment, that they may receive praise of God before men and angels, and be welcomed to their high dignity by the mouth of the heavenly King, pronouncing, "Well done good and "faithful servants, enter into the joy of your "Lord." The dead in Christ, says the apostle, shall rife first t, or at the first refurrection; and to what end this priority of their refurrection ferves, we learn from Rev. xi. 18. where our Lord's accession to his kingdom had just before been spoken of, and is here represented as a time of wrath and a time of love, of

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¹ Cor. vi. 2. ‡ 1 Thefs. iv. 16.

wrath for the unbelieving and disobedient na. tions, and of love for the Saints: "The time " of the dead (in Christ) is come, that they " should be judged, and that thou shouldest " give reward unto thy fervants &c. and should-" est destroy them which destroy the earth," How in vain would any go about to explain this of the Grace of Christ reigning in the hearts of his fervants under an outward establishment of the Christian religion? for how should the Grace of Christ and the spintuality of his religion be established or defended by the laws and weapons of carnal men? Nay, is it not well known how the fword of the ungodly, who destroy all true peace and comfort in the earth, has ever been turned against those who are true of heart in defence of vital religion; and that from the very first establishment of the visible constitution of it under Constantine, the kingdoms of this world, both as to the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction thereof, have for the most part been in the hands of men, either void of religion, or having only the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof?-

If the reader will be at the pains of comparing the Seventh chapter of Daniel with the twentieth of the Revelation, he will find a wonderful agreement betwixt the prophetic visions of those two beloved and inspired wilters, both as to the exercise of the regal and judicial power of Christ and his Saints in his kingdom: In both, the thrones are pitched, and

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and the judgment fits; in both, judgment is given to the Saints; in both, the Saints possess the kingdom, or reign with Christ; in both, dominion and power is taken away from the Evilone, signified by dethroning the kingly horn, who had for a time prevailed against the Saints in the former, and by the binding of Satan for a thousand years in the later; and in both, the grand jubilé of the Holy Empire succeeds the destruction of the Anti-christian powers.

The learned Mede hath * shewn, that the more intelligent part of the ancient Jews did believe that the kingdom of the Messiah in the Seventh Chiliad or millennary, would be a time of exercising his judicial authority, and that the Saints would judge the nations as well as have dominion over the people, as it is declared in Wisd. iii. and doubtless, the plain prophecy of Daniel before mentioned was to them as a strong shield in that their faith: And therefore it was, that they usually called this reign, Magnum diem Judicii, the great day of judgment, or the judgment of the great day ‡; not hereby meaning the short space of

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^{*} See his chapter called Placita Doctorum Heb.

[†] The Jews (if we except some of the more inspired among them) seem to have had no notion of a second refurrection, or of a state of supreme felicity in the eternal heavens with the everlasting Father; but to have looked no surther than the glories of the Messiah's kingdom; and perhaps the light of their dispensation did not reach be-

a natural day, but a feafon of administration, a dispensation, or period of time: Thus the day of their temptation in the Wilderness, of their captivity, of their affliction, fignifies a duration or continuance of many years: And fo Abraham with the eye of faith faw Christ's day, and was glad; but what day shall we suppose meant here, the day when Abraham's Lord fuffered as a malefactor, or the day when he shall be exalted on his throne in his kingdom, to fulfil the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? I shall not here enter into that dispute concerning the application of these words of St. Peter, who, in the same chapter where he speaks of the new heavens and the new earth, fays, that " one day is with the "Lord as one thousand years, and one thou-" fand years as one day;" for whether they be understood as referring to the time of judgment in the millennial reign of Christ, or to the time preceding it, the affirmation holds equally true; observing only by the way, that the general mistake of confining the work of judgment to the compass of a natural day arifes from not distinguishing between the vulgar acceptation of the word, and the different

yond this, these things being reserved for a more persect revelation of divine truth: However, this opinion is submitted to better judges, only with this observation, that the Jews are without excuse in falling so short of their own dispensation, in rejecting the person of the Messiah in his suffering state so clearly testified of by their prophets, and for thinking so unworthily of the nature of his kingdom, both as to its spiritual and material excellencies and glories.

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uses of it in Scripture, according to the nature of the subject to which it is applied. Bishop Hall fets himself to expose this scheme of interpretation for protracting the judgment beyond the time which popular opinion has affigned to it, and has erected it into one of the paradoxes, which he has imputed to the belief of Christ's millennial kingdom. " As if the Al-"mighty, fays he, should be limited to do "his acts by leifure; as if he that made the " world in fix days, and could have made it in "an inflant, cannot in that space of time judge "it? Alas! what is time, but a poor circum-" ftance of finite mortality, not reaching up "to the acts of the Eternal; that Ancient of " days may not have his workings confined to "hours, days, months, and years; and justly "do we fay, that he, who is of himself one "most pure and simple act, works in an in-" flant; he can therefore gloriously reveal his "justice, truth and power to men and devils, "without fuch leifurely respirations." But the question here, with the Bishop's leave, is not about God's power, but his good pleasure; not concerning what he is able to do, but what he fees fit to do, and has declared to be the rule of his proceedings. As God was pleafed to manifest himself in a created nature of temporary existence, so has he made time the meafure of all temporal things, and his manifestations are in order and succession suited to the capacity of his creatures. Man is for precipitating all things, and hastening them to a conclusion, but God proceedeth leisurely, and dealeth L 3

dealeth with man according to the measure of a man; for though time is a poor circumstance of finite mortality to God, yet is it the element and line of our life, and the sphere which comprehends all our knowledge and actions, Certain it is, that God did limit his acts by leifure in his works of creation; and all his creatures by the general laws of their nature advance leifurely both towards their maturity, and their end: Nor is it otherwise in the ways of his providence: He could have delivered his people from their Ægyptian bondage in less than 400 years, and have led them through the Wilderness in less than 40; and instead of lengthening the plan of man's redemption through a feries of events for 4000 years, have appointed the atoning facrifice to take place immediately after the first transgression.—But this fuited not with the scope he had decreed for the manifestation of his wonders, and that display of wisdom, power and goodness which may serve for a theme of adoration and praise to all worlds, when time shall be no more: And fure it is, that we have all great cause to praise his Name (however hardened and impenitent men may abuse such patience) that he doth not execute his sentence speedily, but leifurely against every evil work, because heis flow to anger and flow to inflict punishment; And who knows how flowly and leifurely he may proceed in the administration of the great judgment, not only to explain and justify all his ways and doings to all his creatures, but alfo to subserve many gracious purposes of mercy,

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MEDITATION.

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And haththe Lord prepared his feat for judgment? and shall even his Saints stand before his throne to give an account of what they have done in the body? O how awful is the thought of that day when all our misdeeds shall be set before him, and every secret sin unrepented of, in the light of his countenance! Humble then thyself in the dust, O my soul, at the review of thy manifold transgressions, and confess that it is of the Lord's mercy thou wast not confumed, when thou walkedst in times past according to the course of a careless and vain world; and that he has thus far lengthened the acceptable time, this day of thy falvation. Praise him for thyself, and praise him in behalf of others, who thus granteth space for repentance, that sinners may be converted unto him; and praise him likewise for having provided so many different degrees of blifs and glory for his redeemed ones in his kingdom, that men of grace in different classes may find an entrance there, where many that love much, and have had much forgiven, will be highly exalted above many of their fellows, though now lightly esteemed by the judging, felf-righteous Pharisee, who shall not be able to stand in the judgment before him who refifteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. By the help of this animating hope may we X.

we press on toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus: And in the strength thereof mayest thou, O my soul, be enabled to bear up under thy outward meanness and afflictions, and all the discomforts of this mortal condition, taking up thy cross willingly, bearing it patiently, and persevering faithfully unto death, that thou mayest receive a crown of life. Amen.

All the deceitfulness of false criticism has been employed to extinguish that light of evidence which the Scriptures hold out to the truth of this doctrine concerning the glorious reign of the Saints in Christ's kingdom here on earth: And accordingly, many have attempted to explain away the literal fense of these prophecies, by endeavouring to accommodate them to Ghrift's spiritual reign in the heart by the power of his Grace; thus confounding things temporal with things spiritual, and the external felicity of God's chosen with their inward meetness for it; though the many circumstances enumerated do as plainly refer to the visibility and locality of this glorious kingdom as words can express; the several offices and organs of the body are spoken of in correspondence to their suitable material objects, for exercise and gratification; and the outward constitution of nature in the new earth; together with its productions and glories, and the condition of its inhabitants in very many circumstances and relations, are particularized and graphically described: Insomuch that we must altogether despair designation design

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not grie despair of finding any certain rule for the interpretation of the Scriptures, if what is therein mentioned of the external reality of fuch sensible objects is not to be understood according to the fense of the letter. Besides, if the refurrection of the Saints to reign with Christ on earth meant no more than his Grace acting as the ruling principle in their hearts, why is it spoken of prophetically as a future state of the church, feeing this has and always must have been the case with the Saints from the beginning, for without fuch an indwelling principle they could not be Saints? And what has this to do with the binding of Satan for a thousand years, as it does not appear how the Saints before and after this particular period should be any way profited by such a ligation? And how does it appear that he has been yet so bound as to leave the world free from his deceptions? Or rather is it not manifest, from the experience of all Saints, that they have never yet been free from his temptations and buffettings, from the time of Saint Paul's complaint of this down to the present day? It is moreover declared, that in this happy kingdom there shall be no more forrow or pain, for that the former things are passed away and all things become new *: But when has this yet been the case with the Saints? When have the wicked ceased from troubling them? When have they not been men of forrow and acquainted with grief, in the conformity of their state to that of

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^{*} Rev. xxi.

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their fuffering head, according to their feveral measures? But it is needless to dwell longer on confuting so absurd an interpretation, the weak. ness of which is such, that some men of learning, though no better friends to the truth of this doctrine than those before-mentioned. have feemed ashamed of it; and therefore, as a literal fense belonging to this prophetic part of Scripture looked them too full in the face to deny it, they have fet their invention to work how to explain away the substance of it by allowing a fort of literal completion to it, which they fay, commenced with the establishment of the Christian religion in the Empire by Constantine, who endowed the church with many immunities and liberal donations. At the head of these is Grotius, who here fixes the epocha of the millennial kingdom, and interprets The new Jerusalem, the Lamb's Bride adorned for ber busband, of the external splendor and decorations of the church through the munifcence of Christian princes; as if the outward adorning of gold and fumptuous apparel, which the apostle cautions married women against the use of *, as unbecoming godly matrons, were ornaments better fuited to the present militant condition of that church which is called tobe the spouse of Christ; and as though any part of her excellency confifted in those corruptible riches, the love and defire of which are for bidden us, rather than in that meek and quiet, that humble and loving spirit which is declared

^{* 1} Peter ili. 3.

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to be so precious in the fight of God. But how unsuitable a date this is, wherefrom to reckon the happy and triumphant reign of Christ with his Saints, appears from hence, that within the period of a thousand years, according to this calculation, we may reckon the greatest calamities, disgrace and corruptions that ever befel the church. If in this æra throughout, we are to look for the halcyon days of truth and purity of worship, then did they flourish when the heresy of Arius, denying the true divinity of Christ, prevailed over and persecuted the orthodox believers; when Christians suffered a cruel persecution in Persia for thirty years together *, and when Scythians, Goths, Vandals, and other barbarous nations over-ran the greatest part of Christendom, committing horrible profanations of churches, murders and rapes, as fet forth in the following lamentation of Jerom. Epist 3. Quot matronæ, quot virgines dei, et ingenua nobiliaque corpora his belluis fuere ludibrio? Capti Epifcopi, interfecti presbyteri, et diversorum officia Clericorum: Subversæ ecclesiæ, ad altaria Christi stabulati equi, martyrum effossæ reliquiæ, Romanus orbis ruit, &c. See also Exist xi. And as to the state of religion in the church about this time (not half a century from its establishment by Constantine) the account we have of it, is still more deplorable, every one framing to himself such doctrines as he liked best, and

^{*} See Theodoret. Book v. on the persecution by Isdigerdes.

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forming his creed according to his fancy, whilf a fondness for novelty generally prevailed; as may be feen by the following complaint of Hilary Bishop of Poictiers, extracted from his treatise On the Evil of Divisions: Usus inolevit. qui postquam nova potius cæpit condere quam accepta retinere, nec vetera defendit nec innovata firmavit, et facta fides temporum potius quam evangeliorum. Periculofum nobis admodum atque etiam miserabile est, tot nunc fides existere quot voluntates, tot doctrinas quot mores : Excedimus ea fide quæ sola eft, et dum plures fiunt, ad id cæperunt esse, ne ulla sit. Here is a sad report by a father of the church of the little amity in faith, or rather of the multiplicity of creeds, and of the distracted condition of things in the church fo foon after its establishment; and if we come lower down, we shall not find matters at all mended, but growing worse and worse through introduced superstitions and fraudulent practices to support them; through animosities between the Eastern and Western churches, the pride and ambition of Popes, and the nonfenfical jargon of the schools, set up in the place of sound divinity. Nor did things go better without than within doors, for foon after the Northern ravagers had scourged backsliding Christendom, the Saracens succeeded as the instruments of its farther correction, spreading horror and desolation through all the Southern parts of Europe, as these were afterwards followed by the Turks, to lengthen out the punishment of apostate Christians, and to confine them within narrower bounds; teaching them hereby,

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hereby, that they were not the Saints of the Most High to whom the promise was made of the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens * for a possession: Nor did the combined forces of Christian princes affembled in mad Crusades at all avail to expel the warlike descendents of Ishmael from their conquered settlements in Palæstine, or stop their progress to the Western shores of Europe; but served only to augment their loss and shame, and to evince at the same time, that not the figure of a cross, nor the name of Holy, could give fanctity or fuccess to bloody wars, or avert God's wrath for fin; and that the truth of his religion is to be defended and propagated, not by carnal weapons, but by demonstration of the Spirit joined to purity of life and manners.

But the disgrace and sin of degenerate Christendom, within the period here mentioned, appears in nothing more flagrant than in that evil spirit of persecution which instigated the ecclesiastical powers to make princes the executioners of their Antichristian wrath and hatred on their poor Christian brethren the Albigenses and Waldenses in the valleys of Piedmont, and to butcher them by tens of thousands at a time, with more than pagan cruelty; and this for no other crime than peaceably separating themselves from communion with a church which they could no longer in good conscience join with in worship and doctrines. These

^{*} Dan. vii.

people may properly be called the first refore mers of religion from its impure mixtures; and from their Institutes it was that our Wick. liffe sketched out the plan of that reformation which afterwards took place amongst us under the new editions of Luther and Calvin, From this hafty glance of the state of the church foon after Constantine's edict in its favour downwards, it will fufficiently appear, that Grotius has made a very bad choice of an epoch for the commencement of Christ's happy millennial reign, and that Satan, instead of being bound and shut up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years from that time forward, was never more at large, either to deceive under the fubtlety of the ferpent, or to devour as a roaring lion; nor will it admit of any doubt, whether by flipping into the form of godliness he did not more succeed in his enmity against the power of it in the church established, than by the 'ten bloody perfecutions of it under Rome whilst pagan, before its establishment.

If then the glorious Millennium began in the time of Constantine, then was Jerusalem in prosperity and Sion in peace when ravaged by barbarians and insidels, and when seuds and divisions raged in the very bowels of Christendom; then did mercy and truth meet together when cruelty and heresy, pelagianism, ignorance and superstition overspread the church, and the stronger party in it murdered the best of their brethren for conscience sake, under

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pretence of doing God good service: If these were the happy times of the church, according to Grotius, when the glorious promises of God to his elect were fulfilled, and when all should be love, joy and peace, and the Father be worshipped in spirit and in truth; then must we be at a loss to know what is meant by precious promifes of good things, or how to understand the Scriptures, and the accomplishment of them, nay how to distinguish the reign of Christ from that of Anti-christ on earth: In a word, then we know not whereabouts we are, nor on what foundations we fland, nor what we have to trust to, for our fore-fathers in this case have run away with the bleffing, and yet we fee not wherein they were bleffed above others: In this case, our Jerusalem is no longer a praise in the earth, but a reproach to her adversaries, and her true name is I-chabod, for her glory is departed *; paradife is lost a second time, and no farther restoration of it is to be expected, for the election of Grace is already accomplished in its full number, and we have no lot nor portion in that matter, but our time is that of Gog and Magog, and nothing is now to be looked for but mourning, lamentation and woe.

The absurdity of this error in *Grotius* is too palpable to need farther resutation, and therefore we cannot but express surprize that good Doctor *Hammond*, among others, should be so

^{*} Sam. iv. 21.

led away by it, as to hold that the refurrection of the faints to reign with Christ on earth is past already: Nor is he the only Divine of eminence in our church that has given up a better judgment to the fanciful gloffes of this author, through a faulty obsequiousness to the reputation he possessed for his learning, though perhaps the whole class of commentators on the Sacred Writings cannot supply us with a performance wherein learning and invention are more trifled with than in Grotius's Exposition of the Apocalypse, which so deservedly exposed him to the censure of the learned Dr. Henry Moore. To instance only in a few of his many offensive interpretations: He expounds the outward court and boly city *, of the city Ælia built by Adrian on the spot of ground where Jerusalem stood; and its being trodden down of the Gentiles, of a heathen temple built therein; and he makes the Two witnesses + to fignify two churches of Christians in the same city, the one speaking Hebrew, the other Greek. By the Temple of God or the inward court of the temple || as appointed to be measured, (though it has evidently a mystical or spiritual sense) Grotius understands that particular spot of ground which should not be built upon by Adrian. By Anti-christ he supposes the Jewish impostor Barchochab to be fignified; and the fight of Michael with the dragon he refers to that doubtful report of Simon Mogus tumbling head-long out of the air at the prayer

* Rev. xi. + Ibid. | Ibid.

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of St. Peter: The reign of the martyrs with Christ he expounds to the meaning of the honour done them at their sepulchres; and the letting loofe of Satan to the invasion of Christendom by the Turks, though it must be obferved by the way, that this happened about the middle of his supposed millennium, and above four hundred years before the time mentioned in Scripture for his enlargement: And as to The Bride of the Lamb ||, by which every one that has learned his Christian alphabet, knows to be meant Christ's mystical body, the church, or his spiritual members, Grotius explains (away) this very fignificant figure into a complimental allusion to Constantine's family and retinue: Now what can exceed the profaneness of this last interpretation but his expounding the stone cut out of the mountain without hands *, and the Son of man coming in the clouds of beaven, to fignify the grandeur. and power of the Roman people? Dr. Henry More, who patiently bears with many other fond conceits of Grotius, can no longer contain himself at this, but cries out: "Here is a de-"vice which is scarcely to be uttered without "horror and astonishment! I am infinitely "amazed, fays he, that so learned a man " should fall into so bad an error +."

This method of expounding prophecy to frivolous senses, and in reference to characters

Rev. xix. * Daniel ii. † More's Works, p. 668, printed for Downing.

and

and events of little concernment to the Christian church, is highly reproveable, as it tends to lessen our reverence for the Sacred Writings, and to expose them to the derision of Jews and in. filels, whilft it degrades the fublime mysteries of the gospel and the important transactions relative to the divine economy of our redemo. tion to a level with petty occurrences in the administration of human affairs, oftentimes accidental, or attended with no remarkable confequences, or at least with such as bear not any connection with the falvation of mankind which, I am bold to fay, every thing foretold in Scripture does, in one fense or another. I shall only trouble the reader with one more instance of puerility in this author's interpretation of prophecy. The last trampet-vision record. ed in Rev. xi. exhibits an awful folemnity of divine worship and praise in Heaven, on the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, in which the four and twenty elders before the throne arenpresented as joining in the following hymn: "We " give thanks, O Lord God almighty, who at " and wast and art to come, because thou has " taken to thee thy great power, and haft reight " ed." Can any man of sober judgment im pose, that the Holy Spirit intended less by this facred pomp of prophecy and praise, than fome most glorious and happy revolution in the kingdoms of this world, which should afford matter of joy to the angelic hoft, and of adoration and thankfgiving to the eternal King! And yet Grotius, with his favourite figure Meioly

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Meiofis, makes no more of it than the privilege granted to the early Christians by some of the Roman Emperors of professing their religion at Ferusalem, when the Jews were expelled that city. Such trifling as this with divine revelation offers an infult to the understanding of Christian men, that calls for indignation and rebuke: And when expositors of Scripture think themselves privileged by what they call learning, to vent fuch crude notions for the mind of the Holy Spirit, it is high time to call out to their well meaning followers, to caution them of their danger, and that they beware how they fuffer their reverence of any man to cause them to fall * into his delusions.

Learning has its use when duly employed, and when it knows its proper bounds: Thus, it is serviceable in rightly dividing the word of truth into its literal and allegorical sense, and giving to each its due; in fettling the meaning of doubtful or equivocal terms; in explaining the idioms of languages; in rectifying mistranslations; in clearing up points in history, chronology, topography, &c. In these and such like matters, it lends a friendly aid to the knowledge of the Scriptures, and is not lightly to be spoken of: But in the mysteries of the kingdom, and those deep things of God which can only be spiritually discerned by the light of that wisdom which is from above; here human learning is at the end of its line; all within

^{*} Ecclus. iv. 22,

is the Sanctum Sanctorum, into which none gain admittance but men of humble minds and devout hearts; the learned and unlearned here are both alike, where the Inspiration of the Almighty alone giveth understanding *, and God revealeth his secrets to whom and in what measure he will reveal them. Within the fphere of learning much good or hurt is occasioned by it, according to the principles and dispositions of the parties that respectively possess it, as the same fire differently circumstanced and modified ripens the fruits of the earth or blafts them. Thus, learning in an Austin recommended and enforced every motive and obligation to Christian faith, whilst the fame in a Pelagius undermined the foundations of it: In Erasmus and Archbishop Usher the acquirements of human literature are an ornament and defence to religion, whilst in a Bayle and a Bolingbroke they are a difgrace to the name of it: So that learning, merely as fuch, lends no authority to truth, but only in its right use and application, for it can adopt and defend error as strenuously as it can oppose it, as the apostle Paul was the same great scholar when a bitter enemy to the faith of Christ, as when he defended it against the philosophers at Athens. Hence it is, that science or human learning, in respect to divine things, is spoken of in Scripture under very disparaging terms when set in comparison with the teachings of God's Spirit being called fleshly wisdom, the wisdom of this

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^{*} Job, xxxii. 8. | 1 Cor. ii.

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world, that wisdom by which men knew not God, or when they did know him, glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, [were infatuated in their reasonings] and professing themselves to be wife they became fools *. Such are frequently reprefented as the greatest adversaries to the doctrine of the cross (and generally are) counting the wisdom of God in the simplicity of the gospel no better than foolishness: No wonder then we read, that not many of these wise men were converted to the faith +, for being full of that knowledge which puffeth up, their prejudices on the fide of error were the more confirmed by it, whilst their pride and self-sufficiency rendered them invincible by the force of truth: And in like minds the fame causes still work the same effects, in opposition to the spirituality of religion; for where the heart is not feafoned with humility and grace, human learning can and does, even under the profession of religion, fight as strongly against the life and power of it now, as it did against the first admission of its doctrines formerly. evinces that the work of reformation and conversion must begin in the heart, and that proper dispositions therein for the reception of the truth, must first lead the way to it; and hence it is, that so many applications are made in Scripture to the heart rather than to the head, as, My Son, give me thy heart ‡: Speak ye to the beart of Jerusalem ¶; and that the under-

* Rom. i. † 1 Cor. i. 26. ‡ Prov. xxiii. 26. ¶ Isaiah xl. 2.

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standing and wisdom of the heart is therein fo much infifted on, feeing out of it, as Solomon fays, are the issues of life*. St. Paul thanks God, that his conversation had been in simplicity and godly fincerity with his Corinthians, and not with fleshly wisdom + : And to the pure in heart is promised that great blessing of seeing God 1. All which do confessedly give the preference to right dispositions in the heart over the richest furniture of ideas in the head, and denotes that the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ which maketh wise unto falvation, must have its root in the former, without which the scientific part of religion can only qualify us for fubtle reasoners and admired disputers, seeing its farthest process is only to specious opinions and barren speculations; it may put forth the leaves of a blind zeal and a pompous profession, but cannot bring forth fruit to perfection. An apposite little story occurs on this subject, which, to the best of my remembrance, I met with in Dr. Woodward's Call to a careless world. As two learned men were engaged in a warm difpute on some topic in religion, in their evening's walk, they chanced to fpy a poor shepherd on his knees at his devotions; upon which one of them turning to the other faid as follows: Indocti rapiunt cælum dum nos docti doctè descendimus in Gebennam. The unlearned take the kingdom of heaven by violence, whilft we with all our learning go learnedly to hell.

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^{*} Prov. iv. 23. † 2 Cor. i. 12. ‡ Matt. v. 8. What

REIGN ON EARTH.

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What has been here faid of Grotius, is by 12 no means defigned to reproach that learned author with any ill intention, for his character induces us to believe that he meant well even when he erred most; and both candour and justice require that we put into the other scale the obligations we are under to him for that useful and valuable treatife which he has given us on the moral evidence of the truth of the Christian religion: Nor are his judicious performances on the laws of nations among his other works, to be mentioned without due honour to his name, as he has shewed therein a vast extent of genius, a penetrating judgment and an honest heart: But not being spiritual as he was learned, like some other great scholars, he mistook his province when he set up for an expounder of Scripture-prophecy, and fo his learning proved a fnare to him: He thought to make all things, even in divinity, bow to the force of his genius, but here he undertook a task that was too hard for it: He followed not the right guide to the kingdom of mysteries, but taking the by-path of criticism, which leads to the land of fancy, he there lost himself in the wilderness of imagination: But yet this great man recovered from his wandrings at last, and then became truly great when he became little in his own eyes, and made no account of those accomplishments natural and acquired, which we are so apt to esteem most highly in him; for it is related of him, that, at the close of his life, when he faw all things in a better light, he wished himself in the con-M 4

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dition of John Uric, who was a poor and illiterate, but a pious and devout peafant in his neighbourhood.

The testimony of the primitive Fathers to a future triumphant state of the church under a visible reign of Christ on earth.

HOUGH it be sufficient for our belief in any doctrine, that it be supported by the authority of plain Scriptures; yet as plain Scriptures may be explained away, or the fense of them contested, the agreeing judgment of good men properly qualified to interpret Scripture, will give additional strength to our faith as joining their evidence to that of our own judgment concerning the true meaning of the Scriptures. Now the primitive fathers nearest to the times of the apostles are justly to be deemed competent judges in this matter, not only on account of their skill and integrity, but also as they are the best evidence for what was received for apostolical doctrine in those early days of the church: And if the matter here before us shall appear to be such, the credibility of it will not rest upon the sole authority of the first fathers, but is to be admitted as a doctrine received in the church prior to their testimony, and of apostolical authority, and handed down to us by them for fuch. Now that a belief in Christ's second advent to reign with his Saints on earth, did prevail in those early days of Christianity, appears from the plain testimony of Justin Martyr, who from

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from a philosopher was converted to the faith of Christ about thirty years after the death of the apostle St. John, and who sealed his faith with martyrdom about the middle of the second century. This testimony is to be found in his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, as follows:

Trypho. "Tell me truly; do you own it as "an article of your belief, that there shall be "a new ferusalem, and that your people shall be raised up and assembled thither to live "with Christin joy, &c?

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Justin. " I am not such a miscreant, O Try-" pho, as to fay one thing and mean another: "I have confessed to you before, as you well "know, that this is not only my belief, but that "of many others; and though I owned to "you, that many Christians of piety and good " faith are not of the same mind, &c. yet both "Imyself and every other Christian that is of " a right judgment (orthodox) in all things ‡, " are well affured that there shall be a resurrec-"tion of the flesh to a life of a thousand years "in Ferusalem, which shall be new built, "richly adorned and enlarged, as the prophets " Ezekiel, Isaiab and others have foretold; for "thus faith Isaiah, chap. lxv. Behold I create " new beavens and a new earth, and the for-" mer shall not be remembered nor come into

[‡] Έγω δε και είτινες είσιν Όρθογνωμονες καλά πάνλα χειτιανοί.

" mind: But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold I create feru-" falem a rejoicing, and her people a joy, &c. " And a certain man of our own whose name was John, one of the twelve apostles of " Christ, hath prophecied in that revelation " which was given him, that after the thou-" fand years are ended, there shall be a uni-" versal refurrection to the final judgment." I have abridged this passage in translating it, for brevity fake, and refer the learned reader for fome curious latin notes thereon to the learned Mede +, who upon that affirmation of Justin, that all orthodox Christians in his time did believe a millennium, observes as follows: " If we except the primary and fundamental " articles of our faith, perhaps all antiquity "does not furnish us with a stronger testimony " than this to the truth of any Christian doc-" trine: What a presumptive argument have " we here in favour of its being apostolical, in that it was received by all orthodox men at a time fo near the apostles, when highly " credible it is, that many were then living who " heard the truth from their mouths." Nor is it a small recommendation of his testimony, that the character of this good father is without blemish, a man of great humility though abounding in all the riches of learning, had paffed through the several schools of the philofophers, and found no rest for the sole of his foot but upon the Terra firma of Christian

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truth, in which he profited above most others, studying only to know and make known the way of salvation through Christ, the Saviour. "He was, says Epiphanius*, a holy man and a "friend of God, leading a life much exercised "in virtue, an eminent lover and worshipper of Christ, and bold in his defence of the "Christians in those learned apologies which he presented to the Emperors and Senate of "Rome."

Irenaus, Bishop of Lions, was another father of chief note in the early days of the church, having been a disciple of Polycarp, as Polycarp was of St. John. Very honourable mention is made of him by the fathers of the following ages, and even by those who rejected the doctrine of the millennium, as Eusebius, Theodoret and St. Austin, styling him an apostolical man, admirable, and the light of the Western churches. Ferom in his commentaries on Isaiah and Ezekiel, and Eusebius in the third book of his Ecclefiaftical history, affirm, that he believed in the thousand years reign of Christ on earth, according to the letter of the Revelations; which, by the way, is one very probable reason why all his writings in which he professedly treats that subject, have been suppressed, and that only one of his many volumes (that on herefy) is come down to us, recovered and published by Erasmus, in which, though the matter of the work leads

^{*} Hæres, 46.

not to this point of doctrine, yet there is enough to confirm what Eusebius and Jerom have affirmed of him as to this matter. In particular, he delivers it as an article in the symbol or creed of the churches in his time, that Christ should come to restore all things: And in book v. chap. 28 and 30. that at the end of fix thousand years would be the sabbath of rest, when the Lord will destroy the reign of Anti-Christ, put the just in possession of the kingdom, and restore the promised inheritance to Abraham. Eufebius, who was no friend to this doctrine (nor yet to one of still greater importance) makes Papias to be the first author of it, and endeavours to discredit his authority, by calling him a plain, illiterate man; and yet afferts that he led Irenaus into this error: But if Irenaus was a man of such ability and learning as he is represented, and does appear by what we have left of his works, how came he to fuffer himself to be imposed upon in a matter of fuch consequence by a weak man, when he had no less advantage than that of conversing with those who had conversed with the apostles, and was himself a disciple of Polycarp who was instructed by St. John, the Divine. Besides, it appears from the confession of Ferom himself *, (who had taken up as strong prejudices against this doctrine as Eufebius) that Papias was also a difciple of St. John; and Eusebius owns that Irenaus called him so ‡ and the companion of Polycarp; and furely these connections well

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qualified him for a witness to their doctrine. If Papias was a plain man, he was the less likely to impose upon others; nor could it require much learning to know whether his master St. John explained his prophecy of the millennium in a literal fense or not. Whether Papias was a man of learning or not, is nothing to the purpose of this question; he was an honest man, charged by no author of credit with holding heretical notions, and fo great a veneration had he for the apostles, that he was a diligent collector of all remarkable particulars concerning them, and even of their fayings: What his credit in the church was, appears from his being made Bishop of Hierapolis by the immediate successors of the apostles; and the dignity of his office in those days of the church may be allowed a good prefumptive argument of the sufficiency of his qualifications for the discharge of it; or else we must say, that all things went wrong apace in the church, even in the first century; and then there is an end of all Ecclefiastical authority. But the truth of the matter lies here; the tide of prejudice and opposition ran fo strong against the millennial doctrine after the fecond century downwards, that no arts of calumny and mifrepresentation were spared in order to fink it, infomuch that even good men were by education and the authority of the learned prepoffeffed against it; and this has been so much the case in general for now more than fourteen centuries, joined to the wicked practice of corrupting, curtailing, and suppressing the works

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of the first fathers on this subject, that it is next to a wonder that we have any of their testimonies to it left. It is likewise to be obferved, that together with the opposition to the doctrine of the millennium sprang up in the church a fondness for that critical and contentious kind of theology which teaches men to doubt of every thing, and to dispute against every thing; infomuch that there are few of the canonical books of Scripture which did not meet with some oppugners to their divine authority about that time: But the God of truth hath fet his feal upon the Sacred Writings, and his providence hath preserved them to us; and fo long as we are possessed of this bleffing, so long will this doctrine be supported by an authority against which the gates of hell shall not prevail: and fully affured we may be, that the time when the knowledge of the Scriptures, both as to the mysteries of our holy faith and interpretation of prophecy, will be given in greater clearness and a fuller measure than has been hitherto, and that not in the way of human learning and criticism, but by larger communications of the Spirit of wisdom from the Father of lights in the hearts of the fimple and unlearned, both men and women; and that as well to humble the pride of men on account of their natural and acquired endowments, as to make manifest that the excellency of wisdom is not of man, but of God. That the full understanding of the Scriptures has not yet been given, will readily be granted; and that they shall be understood in perfection cannot be denied,

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denied, since to that end they were given: Now, we know that it is according to the purpose of God, to conceal his secrets from the great and wise of the earth, and to reveal them unto babes *, persons of an humble mind, and of a resigned and simplified understanding; and that thus it shall be in the last days, when he will pour out his Spirit upon the servants and upon the hand-maids ‡, and all his children shall be taught of the Lord †.

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Tertullian was the first of the Latin fathers, and flourished in the very beginning of the third century: His learning and great abilities are confessed by all, nor have we a more unanswerable apologist for Christianity than him against Jews, hereticks and heathens: His writings, we are told, were fo highly esteemed by good Cyprian, the martyr, that he never passed a day without reading some portion of them. He practiced a very rigorous discipline himself, and was a severe reprover of that relaxation of morals that prevailed among the orthodox (for so they affected to call themselves in his time, who placed more in right opinions than in good life and the spirituality of religion) which raised him many enemies in the church, fo that every thing is aggravated against him in the matter of the Montanifts, who seem to have been the Quakers of that day. As to that blasphemous charge laid against Montanus, of pretending that he was the Holy Ghost, that

^{*} Matt. xi. 25.

‡ Joel, ii. 29.

† Isaiah, liv. 13.

is an invented calumny of late date, which no one acquainted with Ecclefiastical antiquity believes, being void of all support from authority 1; and what in truth were the errors of the Montanists, is hard to determine, as none of their defences have been suffered to come down to us. However, that dispute affects not the testimony of Tertullian as to the doctrine of the millennium, which he received from his forefathers in the church, and has transmitted to us with the addition of his own hand and feal. It will be fufficient to our purpose to quote the following passage from his book against Marcion the heretick, which I find translated to my hand by Hanmer in his View of Antiquity, called 'Αρχαιοσποπία. "We confess, says he, that a king-"dom is promised unto us on earth, before "the heavenly one, but in another state [of "the world] viz. after the refurrection for a " thousand years, in a city of divine workman-" ship, the new Jerusalem coming down from " heaven, &c. This, we fay, is provided of "God for the Saints, to be there refreshed " with all spiritual good things, in recompence of those things which in this world we have " either despised or lost: For it is a righteous "thing and worthy of God, that his fervants " should exult and rejoice where they have " been afflicted for his name's fake." are other clear testimonies to this purpose in his book De Resurrectione Carnis, and in that

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[‡] See Lee's Hist. of Montanism, chap. 7. published by Dr. Hickes.

adversus Hermogenem: But I forbear to burden this work with more than needful quotations.

Origen is quoted by Mr. Mede * as a witness to the same doctrine, and though perhaps he may be rather faid to allude to it than professedly to maintain it in the passage quoted from his 13th Homily on Jeremiah, yet it sufficiently proves his belief therein: "Whoever, fays "he, shall continue in the regeneration [fer-" vaverit lavacrum Spiritus Sancti | shall have " a part in the first resurrection; but as to those " who are referved to the fecond refurrection, "they are such sinners as stand in need of the " baptism of fire: Wherefore seeing these things " are so, let us lay the Scriptures to heart, and "make them the rule of our lives, that fo "being cleanfed from the defilement of fin "before we depart, we may be raised up with "the Saints, and have our lot with Christ " Jesus." And well might poor Origen look for good things in the kingdom of the first refurrection, who had fo large a portion of forrow and fufferings on this fide of it. faid to have written above a thousand volumes, and to have been constant in teaching and the business of the church, as also in the practice of piety and many rare virtues; and yet this great man was fuffered by his admirers to want even needful accommodations. Hanmer +, in the conclusion of his account of him, ob-

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^{*}P.618. † View of Antiquity, p. 247. N. B. This book, 8v°. was printed anonymous in 1677.

ferves as follows: " Notwithstanding all his " labours and worth, yet his age and end, as well " as the former part of his life, were accom-" panied with poverty; so small a recompence " had he from men, who were contented freely " to afford him their praises, whilst they kept " fast their purses: Sic virtus laudatur et alget: " And for this rich Ambrose & above all others, " is deferving of blame, that at his death he " was not more mindful of his old and indi-" gent friend Origen: Hence it came to pass, " that he ended his days in a mean and mifer-" able condition. Miserabiliter, inquit Nice-" phorus, infelix obiit, dying in the city of "Tyre, An. Dom. 256." We cannot here enough lament the great decay of brotherly love shewing itself thus soon in the church, and proving to a demonstration, how much of the Spirit of Christianity was already evaporated; for what stronger argument can there be of man's apostacy from the true faith of Christ, than that of hard-heartedness towards their indigent brethren? But where this appears in any towards the ministers of Christ, and persons of unaffected piety, such do, to all intents and purposes of the apostle's meaning, deny the faith, and are worse than infidels *. For it must be said, upon the whole of the matter, that in every age of the church (and how dreadful is the application to our own!) felfishness, or want of charity, is the heart

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This could not be Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, who did not live till a hundred years after. * 1 Tim. v. 8.

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179 and foul of Anti-Christ; and in this evil principle, all pretended zeal for religion in its doctrines or modes of worship, all talking about it and about it, and all study'd appearances of it, is no better than mockery and mummery, hypocrify and lies: And may it not be asked here; or rather, shall it not be affirmed without scruple, that the free-hearted cavalier, without making any pretenfions to piety, is far preferable to fuch a hollow, painted image of a pharifaical godliness. aco This all

Lactantius, that learned apologist for Christianity in the reign of Constantine, and, for the elegance of his style, called the Ciceronian father, was a professed millenary, as more particularly appears from the seventh book of his Institutes, wherein he afferts two resurrections, according to the Apocalypse, and difcourses at large on the reign of the Saints upon earth: Which he calls mille anni cælestis imperii, in quo justitia in orbe regnabit. The thousand years of the heavenly empire, when righteousness shall reign on earth. He speaks there of many things that will then come to pass, among which some indeed are to be placed to the account of opinion and private judgment; which liberty, in a modest use of it, is allowable, where it incroaches not on the dignity of the subject, and offers no violence to any article of Christian faith, especially if it be countenanced by probable inference from Scripture. He does there speak of propagation in this new kingdom, not among the Saints that N 2 Thall

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shall be raised from the dead, but among those that shall be found living at the coming of Christ, who, he says, "Shall abundantly " multiply, and beget a holy generation, dear " to God [as Adam would have done, had he " not finned.] But as to the refurrection faints, "these shall lead a more heavenly life, pre-" fide over the others, and neither marry nor " be given in marriage, but be as the holy "angels." Lactantius has been censured for holding fuch corporeal gratifications as eating drinking and marriage in the new kingdom, but undefervedly and rashly, as neither his distinction betwixt the living and raised inhabitants in that state, nor the innocent and fanctified use of these things therein, has been rightly attended to. It argues great weakness of judgment to take our measures of things in the exalted condition of that kingdom, from this of infirmity, fin and mifery, in which we now live; and if none were to dispute the matter, but those who are too refined and spiritual for such appetites, the number of objectors, I think, would be but small: But sufficient has been faid before on this subject, where it was confidered as resting on no less authority than that of the Scriptures.

I must here beg the candid reader's excuse for a trespass in order of time, by leading him back to the testimonies of St. Barnabas and Hermas, the former in his catholick epistle, the latter in his book styled Pastor or Shepherd; works so venerable for their antiquity and authority,

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aurity, thority, as entitle them to priority of rank, as well as time, in the catalogue of witnesses to this doctrine, if we except that some have raised doubts, whether the apostle St. Barnabas, and the Hermas mentioned by St. Paul, Rom. xvi. 14, were the real authors of these works: This however is certain, that in the early ages of the primitive church, they were held in reverence next to the canonical Scriptures, and publickly read in the affemblies of the Christians: For the authenticity of them, I refer to Archbishop Wake's treatise, called The Genuine Epistles of the apostolical Fathers. Though all the copies, translations and editions of these pieces have been handed down to us, through fo many centuries by men, that were either declared enemies or no friends to the millennial doctrine. and therefore may be supposed to have suffered in their passage from foul dealings, as well as other of the primitive vouchers to the same truth, yet enough has escaped to preserve their testimony. Thus, St. Barnabas, in the forementioned epiftle, speaking of God Almighty's finishing his works in fix days, and resting on the feventh day, and fanctifying it, " Confider, " my children, fays he, what this fignifieth: "The meaning of it is this: In fix thousand " years the Lord God will bring all things to " an end, for with him one day is as a thousand "years, as himself testifieth: Behold, this day shall " be as a thousand years: Therefore, children, " in fix days, i. e. in fix thousand years, shall " all things be accomplished: And whereas it " is faid; He rested the seventh day; it meaneth " this:

"this: When his fon shall come and abolish "the time of the wicked one, and judge the " ungodly, and shall change the fun and moon "and the stars, then he shall gloriously rest " in that feventh day [feventh thousand of years]. " He adds lastly; Thou shalt sanctify it with " clean hands and a pure heart: Wherefore we "are greatly deceived, if we imagine that " any one can now fanctify that day which "God hath made holy, without having a pure "heart in all things: Behold therefore, he " will then truly fanctify it with bleffed rest, "when we (having received that righteous " promise, when iniquity shall be no more, " and all things be renewed by the Lord) shall " be able to fanctify it, being ourselves first " made holy *." Here is a full testimony of an apostolical man to the grand sabbath of rest, to be celebrated in a renewed state of nature by a people, that shall be made holy, when the hand of God shall come to perform the promise made unto the Fathers, to put away iniquity, and to produce a great change in the natural world.

If it be objected to the testimony of this venerable author, that he pretends to assign the exact time, when this revolution shall take place, whereas it appears from our Lord's words, that no man knew the precise time of it +; be it answered, that the assignment of

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^{*} Quoted from Archbishop Wake's translation. + Matt. xxiv. 36.

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the feventh chiliad for this period does not infer our knowledge of the day and hour, nor yet of the year when this shall happen, as the just computation of time from the creation of the world is not known, nay, the difference in calculations is so great (in particular between the Samaritan and Jewish accounts, being no less than 311 years, according to Archbishop Usher) that there remains no hope of adjusting fo disagreeing a chronology; and perhaps this is not without a particular defign of Providence. But though we were free from all doubt as to the menfuration of time, yet foralmuch as the fixth Chiliad will not run out its full length, but there will be a cutting short, because of the last woes for the elects sake, as was observed before, so we should still remain in uncertainty, as to the exact time of this grand event, foralmuch as the measure of this abridgment or cutting short, is not declared in Scrip-However, this hinders not, but as the time draws nigh, fuch evident figns of its approach may be given, such a knowledge of the prophetic numbers and Iconisms may be opened, and fuch clear presentiments of the great Messiah's second advent may be imparted to the minds of fome, as may abundantly ferve both for warning to the wicked, and for encouragement and comfort to the godly groaning under the burden of their present sufferings.

St. Hermas, author of the work called The Shepherd, is the last among the ancients, whose N 4

testimony I shall here make use of; and Eusebius tells us, (Ecclef. bist. book iii.) that according to the received opinion in his time *, the author was the Hermas mentioned by St. Paul. He describes the present state of the world, and the future bleffed state of the church in diverse visions and fimilitudes, which may be stilled divine parables: Among others is that of a monstrous beast, which had on its head four colours, black, a blood-red, golden and white, the interpretation of which was given to him as follows: "The black which thou fawest denotes "the world, in which you dwell: The fiery " and bloody colour fignifies, that this period " of it shall be destroyed by fire and blood: "The golden part are ye who have escaped out " of it; for as gold is tried by the fire and " made profitable, fo are ye also in like man-" ner tried, who dwell among the men of this " world: They therefore that shall endure " unto the end, and be proved by them, shall " be purged: And as gold by this trial is clean-" fed and lofes its drofs, fo shall ye also cast " away all forrow and trouble, and be made " pure for the building of the tower +. But "the white colour denotes the time of the " world which is to come, in which the elect " of God shall dwell, because the elect of God " shall be pure and without spot unto life " eternal." In the third book or chapter, al-

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^{*} Eusebius died An. Dom. 340. † He alludes here to another of his visions, wherein the tower fignifies the glorified church, or new Jerusalem.

luding to the building of the same tower, he gives the interpreter's words as follows: " As "therefore thou hast seen, that after the rejec-"ted stones were cast out of the tower, they " were delivered to evil and crue! spirits, and "thou beheldest the tower so cleansed, as if "it had all been made of one stone: So the "church of God, when it shall be purified (and "the evil and hypocrites, the profligate and "doubtful, and all that have lived wickedly, " shall be cast out) it shall become one body, "and there shall be one understanding, one "opinion, one faith and the fame charity: " And then shall the Son of God rejoice among "them, and shall receive his people with a "true good will." This evidently means a flate of the church on this fide Heaven; for in Heaven opinion and faith have no longer place, the former being there fwallowed up in certainty, and the latter in fruition.

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This testimony of the most early sathers to the doctrine of a triumphant state of the church on earth, is not here so much to be considered as an evidence distinct from that of the Scriptures, as making one and the same with it, their testimony being chiefly made use of here in support of the true interpretation of the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, and to shew that they were understood according to this meaning in the very first ages of the church, not only by the immediate successors of the apostles, but also by such as were cotemporary and conversed with them;

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in which respect the authority of their testimony must be allowed far to outweigh that of fuch among the later Fathers, who fet themfelves to oppose this doctrine. First, because the latter had not the same advantages of knowing the mind of the Holy Spirit from the first revealers of gospel-truth; and secondly, because they lived in more degenerate times of the church, when ecclefiaftical men began to think more lightly of the gifts of the Spirit of God, nay, to speak against them, and set up human learning for their idol, which greatly extinguished their divine light, and ran them into dispute and vain jangling, whilst they magnified themselves and others only in proportion to the credit they were in for scholarship and critical learning, fo turning holy faith into a science and subject of debate. And from this departure from Christian simplicity and humility of heart, which are the only proper foil for evangelical fruits to thrive in, we may account for the great decrease of spiritual gifts in the church from the fecond century downwards, for the rife and progress of Arianism in the fourth, of Pelagianism in the fifth; though in every age of the church, even the darkest, there have been a chosen few, who cherished and preferved the light, and grace and love of God in pure veffels, and may properly be stiled the inner court, whilft the outward court was trodden down by the Gentiles, professing indeed Christianity in a shew of outward worship, but holding the truth in unrighteousnes; Gentiles and aliens from the commonwealth

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in heart and spirit; and whilst they wrapped .
themselves up in the form of godliness, denying, if not persecuting, the power thereof.

The ancient fathers of the church, though highly venerable for their piety and abundant labours in the work of the ministry, and many of them for their constancy in suffering, even unto death for the truth's fake, yet are they not all upon the same level in point of authority, not only on account of their nearer or more remote distance from the times of the apostles, but also as they had their different measures of grace and gifts, and were men of like passions and infirmities with good men now-a-days. They had too their prejudices of education, and constitutional weaknesses, their peculiarities in discipline and opinions, as well as their respective excellencies, to let us know that they were but men, and that we must not trust too much in man, and fo run into an idolatrous kind of reverence: But this ought not to deprive them of that just tribute of respect and praise, which we owe to those early champions in the Christian cause, who have transmitted down to us the invaluable treasure of the Scriptures, and born so much of the heat and burden of the day, in times of fiery trials for our benefit. They were not only men fearing God, and as such respectable, but most of them eminent for great talents and rare virtues, not given to the love of filthy lucre, but dead to the world, and to the honours and praise of it; burning and shining lights in their generations, and not counting

counting even their lives dear unto themselves, fo that they might finish their ministry with all good conscience, and testify the gospel of the grace of God: Nor will many among the later fathers be found undeferving of this charac. ter, Cyprian and St. Austin in particular; and therefore to take pains to discredit their testimony, by exposing to publick view their faults or failings, and that with aggravated censure, argues want of generofity and candour, especially when we confider what hands their writings have passed through, and what circumstances in their favour may now be lost to us at this distance of time. But, to fit down professedly to find fault with them, and to take or make an offence in their writings or characters, in order to expose them to raillery and contempt; this denotes a bad heart, and justly incurs the charge of impiety, whilst it is not only a confessed violation of charity, nay, even of common justice, but serves also to wound religion through their fides, and causes the adversaries of it to rejoice.

The art of criticism has been long applied to bad purposes in divinity, and instead of rectifying mistakes and errors has served greatly to multiply them, infomuch that he who takes for his guides, even some of the most reputed dealers in this way, will foon be at a loss to know whereabouts he is, and what he is to believe: A new world of doubts, difficulties and objections, which he never before dreamt of, immediately prefents itself to his view; and

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every article of his creed must be given up, to be examined with the most scrupulous caution, for he is allowed to believe nothing, but by the rules of the art critical, that is, till he has heard every thing that can be faid against it; nor will the authority of the earliest Fathers of the church be allowed to stand him in stead, or to free him from his embarraffments, feeing we are taught by the more judicious Fathers of criticism to suspect their credit in every thing, and to lay as little stress as possible on their testimony, even with regard to matters of fact: And accordingly, Dr. Fortin lays down as a rule for us to go by, "That it is fafer to "defer too little than too much to their decisi-"ons and authority *;" and that he means here some of the most ancient of the Fathers is plain, in that he includes the learned and pious martyr Justin in the number, who, says he, "are "often poor and insufficient guides in things "of judgment and criticism." It is Irenaus's character, that he was admirably well skilled in all forts of learning both facred and fecular, eminent for his defence of the Christian faith against heretics, and answerably to his name (which fignifies peaceable) a studious promoter of the peace of the church ||, and the healer of that sharp dispute in the time of Victor, between the Eastern and Western churches in relation to the time of keeping Easter. Epiphanius says of him as follows ! "Old Irenæus,

^{*} See his Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 164. See Erasmi Epist. ante Irenæum. F Hares. 31.

"every way adorned by the Holy Ghoft, " brought into the field by the Lord as a valiant " and expert foldier and champion, and anoint-"ed with heavenly gifts and graces accord-"ing to the true faith and knowledge, con-" tended against all the arguments of sottish " heretics, and most accurately confuted them." From the foregoing character of this father, and also from confidering that he was brought up at the feet of Polycarp the disciple of St. John, it appears highly reasonable to allow his testimony, at least with regard to such matters of fact, as he delivers upon his own knowledge; but modern criticism says No; and the reason why, is not hard to guess, viz. because modern criticism is no friend to the belief of miracles; now Irenœus does affert the continuance of extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost in his time, as prophecying, casting out Devils, and healing by laying on of hands; and does also affirm that persons raised from the dead were then living. This made so strongly against Dr. Middleton's system of incredulity, that he had no other way of getting over this father's testimony, than by representing him as a weak and credulous man, which he scruples not to call him: Dr. Fortin adopts the charge, only with the following lenitive: "I " fear it will be no easy task to clear him en-" tirely from the imputation of credulity and " inaccuracy | ;" and to authorize his fear, it he was under any fear about it, he gives the fo

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following quotation from Le Clerc "The cre-"dulity and inaccuracy of the Christians of "those times permits us not to trust to their "relations, especially when they contain any "thing preternatural." Thus the doctor leaning on the shoulders of Middleton and Le Clerc (par nobile fratrum,) gently gives a third kick to the authority of this excellent Father: But he deals more roundly with some others of that class, for he calls Papias a simpleton *; and as to the good martyr Cyprian, he tells us that "What he thought upon in the day, "he dreamt of at night, and the next morn-"ing took his dreams for divine admoni-"tions +." Here the Doctor dispatches his business like a workman, and strikes off the authority of two more of the Fathers at a jerk. But he is much offended with some others of them for their plain-dealing in their remonstrances to the Emperors in favour of the Christians; for taking occasion to extol the genteel civility, decency and politeness observable in the apologies of Athenagoras and Melito, he tells us that "Tertulian compared to them "in point of address and courtefy is a very "clown, and so is Justin Martyr :" I did not know before, that gentility and politeness were qualifications requifite in the Ancient Fathers of the church; however, I have no objection to these in proper time and place, nay, think them commendable; and therefore the rather wonder that the Doctor should treat

^{*} Ibid. p. 82. † Ib. 299. ‡ Ib. p. 85.

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Justin Martyr and Tertullian so unlike a gentle. man. It is natural to observe here, how well the Doctor's preference in favour of politeness over that clownish virtue, plain-dealing, supplies us with an apology for Pope Gregory the Great, in a part of his character hitherto much censured, I mean his congratulatory address to the Emperor Phocas, who murdered his master Mauritius, and feized on his Empire: The following words are to be found in that epiftle: Benignitatem pietatis vestræ ad imperiale fastigium pervenisse gaudemus; lætentur cæli, et exultet terra, &c. "We rejoice that the benigni-"ty of your Godliness has ascended the imperi-" al throne: Let the heavens rejoice, and the " earth be glad, &c." How differently would Justin Martyr and Tertullian, have expressed themselves in writing to such a murderous usurper? but they were clowns, and Gregory a man of courtefy and politeness; and what man of breeding in this polite age can be guilty of fuch coarse language, as to stile a genteel compliment by a Bishop of Rome, the base flattery and fervile profitution of a time-ferving church-man? But if the Doctor's genteel civility is so proper a part in the character of a man of God, even in the discharge of his ministerial office, what must we suppose that he thinks of that rough-hewn man John the Baptist, who with his unfashionable coat, and no less unfashionable behaviour, had the asfurance to handle Herod so boldly in the matter of Herodias? What less, than that he deferved to be put into the stocks for using fuch

REIGN ON EARTH. 193

such clownish freedoms with a person of his quality; for as to beheading, I am persuaded that the Doctor deems that punishment more than adequate to his offence.

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False criticism is of ancient standing in the church, as appears from Scripture, wherein we are cautioned against such as turn aside from faith unfeigned (the fimplicity of faith) to vain jangling, and fuch as doat about foolish questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh railing, evil furmizings, and perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth. But though this science, falsely so called, and cenfured by the apostle in his epistle to Timothy, has long had its favourers and practitioners, yet perhaps it never flourished more than within a century past, and this to the staggering of man's faith in every article of religion, and to the introducing a general scepticism amongst us; insomuch that nothing is more common at this day, than to hear the first principles of religion, as the doctrine of original fin, and the renovation of our hearts by the Spirit of Grace, not only called in queftion but derided: And as to going to God in prayer for the light of his Spirit, confessing our blindness, and submitting our understandings to his teaching, as David directs and did, what rank enthusiasm must this appear to such as hold, that the Spirit of Criticism is sufficient for us? Or if they grant that the former way be taken by the illiterate, common fort of people who have no other, yet they expect it **fhould**

should be allowed that they themselves can do better without it: In truth, their meaning and defire is to be thought the only oracles of wisdom, and to lead captive the minds of the people by instilling into them a flavish veneration for their supposed learning; whilft they themselves, though ever learning, never come to the knowledge of the truth, because they feek it not in fimplicity of heart, and therefore stand in need of being taught, which are the first principles of the oracles of God. I diffinguish here betwixt true criticism and the false, in respect to divine things, meaning by the former a found judgment and clear difcernment joined to an honest and humble heart and pious affections, as these last are necessary qualifications here, not only to beat down all felf-conceit and fondness of praise from men, to regulate the imagination, and to give fobriety to the judgment; but also to fit us for that wisdom from above, which maketh men of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord *: Thus instructed, the divine critic will be thoroughly furnished for his work, be able rightly to divide betwixt truth and error, to lay open the deceitful covers of specious sophistry, to separate the precious from the vile, and to give all their due, credit to whom credit, praise to whom praise, and censure to whom censure is due. Here human learning is in fafe hands, and will be applied to its proper use; in particular, it may be helpful on occasi-

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REIGN ON EARTH. 195

on, to answer a fool according to his folly, lest be be wife in his own conceit *.

Every thing in true religion has its counterfeit in the false; thus, as there is a false worship, a false faith, a false zeal &c. soalso is there a false criticism in divinity, and her sons are many according to their respective natural turns or talents. Thus, there are your minute critics, whom Mr. Pope somewhere calls, " Word-"catchers that feed on fyllables." These will go nine times round the plain meaning of a word to find a flaw in it, or by an artificial twist make it speak contrary to its most obvious fense: They deal much in ancient manuscripts, especially if little known or hard to come at; and they are fond of monofyllables and particles, as by a dextrous management of these, by changing, transposing, leaving them out, or putting them in at pleasure, they can do wonders with any fentence you shall give them: They will even venture with their art to take the tree of life out of the midst of the garden, and place it where they please. Though this fort of critics appears not very formidable at first fight, yet by their indefatigable diligence they may do a world of harm, as the smallest worms bore holes in ships that link them at last.

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Secondly, There is the oftentatious critic, with all his pomposity of quotations in the an-

* Prov. xxvi. 5.

cient languages, from any authors, if profane no matter, so that he may make a show of his learning; not that he has a better understanding than others because of this, but rather a smaller share of it, for spending his vigour fo much on the bark of the tree of knowledge, he is the less able to make his way to the heart of it: Besides, he is often more obliged to good indexes than we know of, for the many fignals he displays of his much reading; but he is defirous to appear wife in the Scriptures, and so sets about to explain St. Paul's epistles by the use of the same words and phrases as they stand in the Greek comedies of Aristophanes; he will be as little obliged to revelation as he can, and fo only takes his words from thence, whilst he borrows the sense of them from the heathen poets, and so turns the facred canon into a pipe to play his profane tunes upon.

Thirdly, There are your bold adventurers in criticism, who despising all borrowed helps, and to tread in beaten tracks, will undertake to shew you a new road to faith, more to be depended on than any known before; nay, pretending to have found out, by a rare invention of their own, the only true evidence that can support the authority of the Pentateuch, and of the renowned legislator of the Hebrews: But some that were beguiled by the fair promises of one of these deluders, do affirm, that after following him through many dark and thorny ways, he left them in a wilderness poor-

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er in faith than he found them; herein resembling those sharpers who decoy credulous people into by-places, under pretence of shewing them hid treasure, and then rob them of their money. Some of these who boast so much of their curious discoveries, do not scruple to affirm, that they have seen the original marriage-contract between church and state, and that they can tell you to a penny, how much the former got by the match; though some more worthy of credit, are ready to prove to a demonstration, that what she gained thereby in the article of wealth, comes far short of what she lost in true estimation and honour, and that she has since given up more than became her.

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Fourthly, There is the race of Gigantic Critics, fo called as they may be compared to the fabulous giants of old who attempted to form heaven. These are men of brass with a witness, who fear neither God nor man, but despite all authorities, and in a full confidence of their own fufficiency place themselves without ceremony in the Chair of Infallibility. The most Ancient Fathers of the church, they account no better than pigmies in divinity, and feldom speak of them but with contempt; nay, they scruple not to reject their testimony, even as to matters of fact within their knowledge, and so allow them not the same credit which we give a common mechanic. They pretend to have by them the exact dimensions of their understandings, and, by the help

of their critical scales, to tell you the weight of their honesty to a grain. In a word, they do roundly affirm, that though they have paffed fo long in the church for Fathers, yet they were in truth but children, and that a tolerable modern critic, affifted by some late improvements in this art, knows better what they heard, and faw, and faid, than they did themselves. Nor are they much more modest with regard to the Scriptures, rather giving their own fense to them than receiving that which they hold forth; nay, questioning the divine authority of such books or passages as fuit not with their particular systems and fancies, for nothing is allowed to stand before them that is in the way of building up themfelves and the reputation of their art critical. The infpired Writings must bend to the rules of their own grammar; and as they are all for comprehensibles in religion, they never willingly admit any thing into their creed, which does not come within the sphere of their own intellect. They are very unwilling to own miracles, but when they cannot help it, limiting as much as possible their faith by the laws of nature, whereas miracles put things out of their course, and they often see no manner of occasion for them, or can explain them better in the way of natural operations, usually stiling such supernatural acts the expence of miracles, as though they put God Almighty to fome needless charge, or occasioned him trouble: On these and other accounts, they feldom admit of any miracles wrought fince

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the times of the apostles, however credibly attested; and how far farther back they would carry their incredulity, if they durst, we know not, but by their nibling we may guess their meaning. Nay, some of these Gigantic Critics of the first rate, have stood upon little referves in this matter, and have levelled their clubs against the miracles recorded both in the Old and New Testament. It may be needless to observe, that these bold disputers bear no good will to the doctrine of particular providences, for all fuch divine interpolitions border fo nearly on the dispensation of miracles, that they are an offence to their system. Nor are we to wonder, from this character of them, that they are fuch professed enemies to the spiritual sense of the Scriptures, stiling it mystical jargon, and fo rob religion of its true life and power, leaving nothing in the room of these but a sapless, steril, unaffecting system of ideas, notions and opinions, which neither warm nor comfort the heart, nor have any relation to the spiritual part of man. They deny the typical references of the Jewish economy to that ministration of the Spirit, which exceedeth in glory *, and fo rob the Levitical dispensation of its testimony (in the way of figurative prophecy) to the spiritual dispensation of the gospel; hereby taking away the feal from both Testaments, and nullifying the evidence both of the promises of good things and of the accomplishment of them, and set-

2 Cor. iii. 8.

ting up the shadow, with its meaning, in the place of the substance; whereas St. Paul, fpeaking of the Jewish priesthood and the fervice of the tabernacle, calls them the shadow of heavenly things +; and olfewhere * he expounds the cloud, the passage of the Hraelites through the sea, the manna, the rock yielding water, &c. all in a mystical sense: Now, fays he, All thefe things happened unto them as types I or figurative exhibitions of things to come: And his other allegorical or myflical interpretations of Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael, as relative to the two covenants, shew a figurative sense wrapped up in these characters. Nor are the preceptive parts of the law without their figure: Thus, for instance, that of not muzling the ox that treadeth out the corn || is expounded by the apostle in an allegorical fense, and saith, that for our fakes it is written. Now these are only samples among many other things under the law, that have their perfect interpretation and accomplishment in the gospel-ministration or the spiritual life; and therefore to oppose mysticism here, is to oppose the right interpretation and most edifying truths of the Scriptures, which that kind of criticism does which rejects their spiritual reference and meaning under pretence of doing justice to their grammatical and verbal fense. But I shall keep back

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⁺ Heb. viii. 5. * 1 Cor. x. ‡ This is the closeft interpretation of the words in the original: Ταῦλα δὲ πάνλα τύποι συνέξαινον έκείνοις. 1 Cor. x. 11.

1 Cor. xi. 9.

what I have farther to offer on this head, till I have done with the following critic.

Though it is with the utmost unwillingness that I enter upon personal animadversions, yet where the honour and truth of religion are concerned, we are called upon not only to declare against dangerous errors, but against the authors of them also, especially where they stand in some degree of reputation for their learning, and so are the more likely to diffuse the poison of their errors, by the seeming authority of their names. I shall here content myself with instancing in the noted Le Clerc of Amsterdam, for an example of the last mentioned species of false criticism, not only as he was in himself a most flagrant proof of it, but may in a fort be called the Father of our modern heterodox critics, uniting in himfelf the fingle talents of many others, and forming one compound of Arian, Socinian and Pelagian, as appears from the whole tenor of his writings, in which he all along oppofes the doctrine of original fin, or the derivative corruption of man's nature through the fall; and denies, that by Grace is any where meant in Scripture the inward operation of God, or the work of his Spirit in our hearts; affirming that it fignifies no more than his affording us outward means and help, for man to make the best he can of by the strength of his own natural powers. He fets himself to weaken or explain away every proof of the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ,

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Christ, as also of the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity; and rejects the spiritual sense of the Scriptures throughout, ever setting up the letter that killeth, against the Spirit that giveth life; and dealing as unmercifully by the letter, where it should stand in its full force, if it makes against his Socinian tenets: And sorasmuch as the Fathers of the church in general are so many vouchers to a spiritual meaning in the Scriptures, no wonder that he takes such pains to invalidate their testimony, and to treat them with contempt.

That learned Leyden divine, Withus, fo well known for his moderation and candor, expresfes himself thus in relation to Le Clerc: "I " protest, says he, that I have all due esteem " for his learning; but many of his opinions "dispersed through his works favour so strong-" ly of Arianism, Pelagianism, and Libertinism, "that I utterly abhor and detest them as they "deferve *." And in his animadversions on the same author, for calling in question the inspiration of the 69th and 109th Psalms, though quoted in the New Testament, and for pronouncing them to be the dictates of a mind inflamed with passionate anger, he remarks as follows: "He most impiously doubts whether "David was the author of those Psalms. "What name shall I give to his doubt? Shall "I call it ignorance? Or an inexcusable itch " of disputing? Or the prophane dictates of 61

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^{*} Miscell. Sacr. Tom. i. p. 345.

" a presumptuous mind? The apostles witness "that they are David's Pfalms; they quote "them as part of the Scripture; Peter also, in " a fet discourse *, pronounces, that the Holy "Ghost spake so by the mouth of David; " and here a critical divine openly maintains, "that these Psalms are not from the Holy " Spirit, but from a mind agitated with the paf-" fions of anger and revenge! I cannot but be " aftonished at so great impiety +."

It is to be observed here, that divine love and our spiritual union with Christ is often reprefented in Scripture under the image of human love; and in particular, that of espousals and marriage, though in its present state of imperfection and degradation: But love can only represent love, for all other types and images fall short of it. Now the Canticles or song of Solomon is a figurative or mystical representation of the spiritual marriage, union or love, betwixt Christ and his mystical body the church, and every member of the same, imaged to us under the most endearing passion that belongs to human nature in its present state, and will be best received and understood by persons that are in the highest degrees of purity and innocent love; but by people of gross conceptions, and fuch as are most impure in their passions, that divine book will be groffly misunderstood, and misrepresented. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the

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* Acts i. † Ib. p. 218.

heavenly,

heavenly, fuch are they also that are heavenly. Now Mr. Le Clerc not having spiritual senses exercised to savour spiritual and heavenly things, could conceive no higher of it in his impure imagination, than as a mere carnal production of a wanton fancy, and therefore is for excluding it from the ficred Canon, comparing it to the fong of the Giant Polyphemus to the nymph Galatea in Ovid's Metamorphosis. This impious effrontery of Le Clerc so far rouzed the godly zeal of honest Withus, as to extort from his otherwise patient temper the following rebuke: "The Song of Songs, fays he, accord-"ing to this author, has nothing mystical in "it, but is compared to the ruftic, gigantic " fong of Polyphemus. Should we go on thus, " how little of what is divine will be left us " at last! O miserable church that has so long " endured fuch writings! Or rather, O bold " and impious criticism, that assumes such a " right to itself over divine matters, and en-"deavours fo wickedly to destroy the founda-" tions of our faith ."

Le Clerc is much offended with the miracle of Lot's wife being turned into a pillar of falt, and strains every nerve of his art critical to explain it to another meaning; but not being quite satisfied with his success, and conscious to himself that there appear marks of his having laid violent hands on the text, he does not

+ Ib. p. 230.

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fcruple to fay, with impudence unparallelled, that a wrested interpretation in that place would be more tolerable than the supposal of a miraculous event, for the fake of two little words. Withus upon this exclaims, as he well might: "What perverseness is here! the ancient pro-"phets magnified the name of God for his " wonderful works, but now it passes for wif-"dom to disparage miracles, and to practife "critical devices to expunge them out of our "creed. By this instance, we may see what "it is to make that proud reason the interpre-"ter of Scripture, which chuses rather to "force it to speak any other sense, than to al-"low in it what is above its comprehension. "Who can read fuch bold interpreters without "indignation? Is reason asraid lest God should " work miracles? What part of the world do " we now live in, that we hear fuch things in "the midst of Christendom as even the hea-"thens would be ashamed of! Nothing should "appear so incredible to us in Scripture as to " tempt us to offer violence to the plain words " of it by forced interpretations; and yet this "is what Mr. Le Clerc does without scruple. "What wickedness is it to set up our notions of "probability in opposition to the clear and " plain narratives of the facred history *?"

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I have here contented myfelf with abridging these remarks of Withus on this audacious critic, who spends fifty pages of his work in

^{*} Tom. ii. Exerc. vii.

animadverting upon him, wherein he gives him due correction without scurrility, and is zealous without abuse. Among other things highly reprehensible, he charges him with denying the inspiration of the historical parts of Scripture; and also with faying, that a good critic, without any inspiration, might have faid better things than many in the Proverbs of Solomon, Now can one forbear crying out, O the gigantic profaneness of Le Clerc! What amazing felf-confidence is here! Sure a man that had one grain of modesty left, would rather suppose ignorance in himself than want of wisdom in the Scriptures, would place much to the imperfection of human knowledge; to the account of phrases, customs, allusions, &c. now not clearly understood; or to secret reasons in the divine Mind for suffering many things therein to remain hid for a time, to exercise the submission of our understanding, or to keep down the pride of knowledge: Or where any truths there delivered, appear to be of common observation and within the reach of an ordinary capacity, he will however reverence them the more for the weight and fanction they derive from fuch unquestionable authority: But Le Clerc set himself above the Scriptures, as a learned critic to rule over them, and therefore lost all reverence for them: That knowledge which puffeth up, befotted and entangled him in vain disputations and reasonings, which led him to doubting, which gave him up to unbelief, and so he became captive to the spirit of delusion: And yet this is the man who

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who hath bewitched fo many of the learned in Christendom with a reverence for his authority, even he who has worked up Infidelity into a system, to the disgrace of the protestant religion, and hath taught those very men who eat the best bread of the church, to stab that religion to the heart, the fons and fervants of which they falfely call themselves. And would to God that the poison of this man's false doctrine had not introduced itself into the church of England! but it has spread itself wide uponher, nay, it has funk deep into her. I forbear to fay what mischief it hath already done, though I know in part; and I dread to think how much more it is likely to do, whilft the ftream of her fairest and best preferments runs fo strongly in this channel. But this hope and confidence have we, that the fame Lord who hath built his church upon a rock, with this promise, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her, will protect and defend it against all the affaults of its enemies; and will continue, as heretofore, to raife up faithful witnesses in every church, to bear testimony to the word of his Grace, men not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, nor seeking the favour or honour that cometh of men, but that which cometh of God only; whom he will endow with the Spirit of wisdom and of a found mind, and make them powerful in word and in deed, to convince gainfayers, to fuffer reproach and endure the cross patiently, and to rescue the honour and truth of the Scriptures, both in the letter and in the Spirit of them, from all the 2

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the depredations and violences, all the corrupt interpretations and profane handlings of infidelity and a false criticism.

The candid reader will not construe any thing that has been here faid in favour of the early Fathers of the church, as meant to lift them up into infallible expounders of Scripture, but only to affert the credit due to their testimony, and defend their honour against the calumnies of bold detractors, who take a fancied merit to themselves in depreciating these ancient worthies, that they may adorn themfelves with the spoils of their reputation; and yet if we take an exact survey of these critical robbers, they will be found not to reach up to their knees. How far will they be found, upon comparison, to fall short of them in humility, felf-denial, voluntary poverty, patient suffering for the truth, and other rare virtues, for which they were fo eminent? and as to their writings, they warm the heart of the reader as they came from the heart of the writer, they are spirited, full of unction, full of authority; whilft those of their modern adverfaries are as cold as they are critical, unaffecting, pædagogical. But as all human characters have their blemishes, and must have in this state of imperfection, so the primitive Fathers were not without theirs: They brought with them some prejudices of education and speculative errors from the schools of the Philosophers, especially the Platonic (which came the nearest to the truth) from which their con-

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version to Christianity did not altogether set them free, at least for a time, which mixing with their religious opinions, grew up as tares with the wheat, and sometimes it requires a careful hand to separate them; but in the fundamentals of faith they were found, nay, are of authority to us, as appears from the ancient creeds, particularly those of Irenæus and Tertullian which are come down to us. They are charged indeed, some of them, with running their allegorical interpretations of the hiftorical parts of Scripture to excess; but the moderns are much more blameable in rejecting all allegorical meaning as not belonging thereto, feeing historical facts may be as instructive and profitable for life and doctrine as fables, types, emblems or parables, which are the most ancient methods of teaching, especially in the East, even to this day; and fully perfuaded Iam, that wonders in this way remain to be opened by the Spirit of God in the history of the Old Testament, which is not only to be considered as a register of real facts and transactions, but also as replete with prophetical and mystical meaning; propheticis gravidata sensibus, et velata tegminibus, as St. Austin lpeaks, who is a strenuous affertor of the double sense of the Scriptures, figurative and literal, and accordingly lays down the following rule for us to go by: Nec illis confentiendum qui solam bistoriam recipiunt sine allegorica significatione, nec illis qui solas figuras defendunt repudiatâ bistoricâ veritate *. "We must

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^{*} See much of this Father on this subject, in his celebrated treatise De Civitate Dei, lib. 15, 16.

"neither hold with them who keep only to the history without allowing the allegorical fense, nor yet with those who are so taken up with the mystical as to reject the historical meaning."

It is well known, that every proper name of a person and place in the Hebrew language has a meaning belonging to it, and denotes fome quality, office, act or character, &c. which may ferve as a key to the figure: Thus Melchisedec fignifies King of righteousness: But he was also king of Salem, which fignifies peace. Here we have both the letter and the Spirit of the letter, opening to us this Scripture-doctrine, that the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteoufness is quietness and affurance for ever *: And it has also a typical as well as a doctrinal meaning, as Melchisedec points in his character to Messiah, the Lord our righteousness |, Prince of peace t, the scepter of whose kingdom is a righteous scepter +; and who giveth true peace to his people ¶.

Doctor Everard in his Gospel-Treasury opened §, gives us the following interpretation of Joshua xv. ver. 16, 17. from the etymology of the Hebrew names: "And Caleb said; He "that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to "him will I give Achsah my daughter to wise:

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^{*} If xxxii. 17. || Jer. xxiii. 6. | ‡ If. ix. 6. | † Heb. i. 8. | ¶ If. xxxvi. 12. | § P. 355.

" And Othniel the fon of Kenaz, the brother " of Caleb, took it; and he gave him Achfab "his daughter to wife." As Kirjath-lepher, fays the doctor, fignifies in Hebrew the city of the book or letter; Achfah, the rending of the vail; and Othniel, God's good time, or the Lord's opportunity; fo it will fignify, that he who masters or opens the letter, shall have for his portion the rending of the vail, or that which the taking away the cover of the letterpresents to him, viz. the mystery of the kingdom; or, according to the vulgar phrase, he that breaketh the shell shall have the kernel: Now Othniel (which fignifies God's good time or feason) smote and took the city of the letter, denoting that this can only be done when the Lord fees fit. This interpretation of the doctor ought not to be derided as fanciful, seeing the sense of the words leads to it, and opens therein an important truth, viz. That there is a mystery concealed in the history, and that we are to make our way to the former through the latter. The doctor allows the truth of the history to a tittle, as the taking of fuch a city by Othniel, and his marrying the daughter of Caleb; and therefore he cannot be charged with robbing the letter of its due; but if by the authority of the same words that he believes the literal transaction, he also admits an useful truth figured by it, we ought certainly not to wife: object, but rather to allow an advantage on the fide of his method of interpretation. Pefides, it is confessedly a more important part of knowledge, to be informed that even the hif-

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historical parts of the Old Testament-often represent to us heavenly things and spiritual mys. teries, than it is to know who married Caleb's daughter. I do not fay that every particular circumftance or character in the history hasit figurative fense, seeing many are connected with, and only mentioned for the fake of those that have: to which purpose are those words of St. Auslin: Non Sanè omnia quæ gesta narrantur, aliquid etiam significare putanda sunt, sed propter ea quæ aliquid signissicant, etiam ea quæ nibil fignificant attexuntur *. I shall leave it here to the confideration of the reader, if those words of the apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 15. Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart, does not evidently imply, that the blindness of the Jews hindered them from feeing the mystery of the gospel figured in the letter of the Scriptures throughout the whole economy of that people.

The rich treasure of instruction that is to be found in the Hebrew Scripture-names of perfons and piaces, (in both which are couched deep mysteries) affords matter of wonder, that the adepts in that language have not made more use of their skill in explicating the types and sigures with which they are pregnant; as this would give light to a species of historical prophecy and divine instruction, contained in the characters of the Old Testament, which are now read only as so many uncouth, hard names, without any meaning, and consequent-

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ly benefit to the reader. The pious and excellent Bromley in his Sabbath of Rest +, has given us a very edifying specimen in this way, in the journeys of the children of Israel through the wilderness, which, as well as every other dispensation of that people, is a picture of the Christian's progress through the wilderness of this world, and befel them as types for our As to that objection of danger instruction. lying in the way of this kind of interpretation from an over-indulgence of fancy, it concludes too much; for at this rate we must forbear exercifing our faculties both on the literal and the spiritual sense of the Scriptures, seeing imagination may mislead the best in some things both ways, and nothing but a total infpiration can absolutely secure us from mistakes, through the play of imagination and the fallibility of our judgment; but where the heart is rightly disposed, I am bold to affirm, that such mistakes will not be of very bad consequence. There is confessedly some danger both on the right hand and on the left in most things, and we must steer the middle way as well as we can; but where guide-posts are set up, if men chuse rather to cover them with dirt, than pursue the directions they give, because they tell not every little turning in the road, fuch, it must be owned, have little claim to our compatition. Much stir has been made about the method of allegorizing used by some of the Fathers,

[‡] A new edition of it was lately published, by W. Heard in Piccadilly.

but wherefore I see not: Their instructions in this way are all to the purpose of godly edification; and he that leads us fafe to heaven, either by the path of allegory or that of plain precept, most certainly deserves our thanks, and it would ill become us to quarrel with him for not shewing us another way. We ought not to disparage any means that lead to a good end, but I must own that the former has generally had the better effect upon my mind, as well as upon many others; and as far as I can judge from fomething of experience, I am inclined to think, that Bunyan's beautiful and instructive allegory or parable of the Pilgrim's Progress has brought more persons to a godly feriousness than all the reasoning of Archbishop Tillotson. I shall conclude this section with recommending to the learned reader a treatife intitled Letter and Spirit, by the Rev. Mr. Holloway, rector of Middleton-Stony, Oxfordsbire. The introduction to it is of more general use, and deferves to be published by itself.

In answer to the last foregoing objection, it may be observed, that teaching by the grammatical sense of the Hebrew Scriptures is not without its difficulties and uncertainties any more than allegorical instruction, and that because of the uncertain founding of the Hebrew words through the loss of the vowels, which subjects the same word to various, doubtful and even contrary fenses: Thus the fame word [Barach] in that language fignifies both to bless and to curse: And though the

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he ncontext will often direct to the right choice, vet where it happens that the same word so fits different or contrary fenses, that the meaning of the proposition is complete in either, we must in that case be at a loss which to take; as for example, whether we are to understand Fob's wife as bidding her husband to curse, or to bless God and die: And if we are to go by that rule, that where we are in doubt betwixt two opposite meanings, the better is to be preferred, then it should be translated bless, and not curse; for the reproof of Job to his wife, on this occasion, may not have respect to her advising him to curse, but to die, or make away with himself. This perplexity arising from different senses in the same word answers to the meaning of Babel, which fignifies confusion or mixture, and makes evident that the Hebrew tongue, though the most perfect that we have, did fuffer loss in its purity through the confusion of the properties in human nature first introduced by fin, and afterwards represented externally by Babel, as its visible type; for highly credible it is, that this confusion happened in part immediately after the fall, or when Adam fell from harmony into discord, and from unity, or fimplicity, into multiplicity; whence proceeded division among his posterity, who otherwise would all have been of one mind and heart, as well as of one speech; though it is not to be doubted, that this confusion and division in language did most remarkably take place, and had its full effect at P4 the

the time of the building of the tower Babel: perhaps by a miraculous infatuation, attended with a paralytic affection of the organs of speech diversified, causing men to sound the vowels differently, which must necessarily introduce confusion and misunderstanding both in speaking and writing any language, as every one will readily find upon making the experiment. In thinking on this subject, I was led to confult the meaning of the Scripture-names mentioned in the eleventh chap. of Genesis, which treats of Babel, to fee what light they might afford on this subject: Now it is there faid, that Heber, (from whom the Hebrews, his descendents, took their name) begat Peleg, which fignifies division, thus bearing in his name the fign of what happened to the Hebrew language, for in his time it was that the earth was divided ‡, or that men separated themselves, according to their dialect or divided tongue, and so became the founders of different nations: And hence going back t the preceding chapter, I found that the sam Heber is there recorded to have had two fons Peleg and Joktan, the latter of whose name fignifies firife or contention, denoting the strife or angry debate is of kin to division i the collateral line. Surely, faid I to myself there is undoubtedly a mystery in these genealogies; and if Heber had begotten a third son, I suppose his name would have signified False Griticism.

We are hence furnished with a fad proof among a thousand others, of the deplorable fall of man, in that he hath loft the original language, in which all things are expressed and understood according to the truth of their properties and natures, without uncertainty or mistake, wherein he comes short of the birds of the air and the beafts of the field, which all, by instinctive founds, understand one another in their feveral tribes, without danger of being deceived; for though they loft a happy flate of existence through man, yet they fell not after the manner, nor according to the woeful consequences of his transgression. But if the confusion of languages is a fore evil in human nature; so the uncertainty, ambiguity and false use of language in every tongue, proceeding from the same cause, have abundantly increased the miseries of mankind; and in vain do men go about by art to remedy these evils, for human art and device, guided by felfishness and subtlety, have their ground in Babel, and ferve only to give an external birth to the hidden mystery of iniquity, in the several apparent forms of the deceivableness of unrighteoulness; examples of which we have in every class of men from the political negotiator down to the lowest trader, more particularly in the false pleader, the false critic, and the false orator, who professedly deal in sophistry, and in darkning of counsel by words. Nay, the spirit of contradiction and dispute in almost every family and conversation, betrays the twistings and contortions of the crooked ferpent, whose delight

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Nor is religion without its Babel, nay, it is imaged here in its fullest dimensions, and rifes to its greatest altitude, as is conspicuous in the various disagreeing parties throughout the world; in the Lo here! and the Lo there! in the endless controversies, and the blind zeal for matters of mere opinion and unconcerning modes of worship; and as the many different religions answer to the confusion of languages, so do the different sects in every religion, to the different dialects in each language. Governors have endeavoured to heal or suppress these divisions, but have always failed, as the means used have not been adequate to the end proposed: They have applied methods of restraint, constraint, or persecution, as best suited their tempers or politics, but these remedies, the last more especially, are ever worse than the disease, as the practice of oppression and cruelty is abominable, whereas difference in opinion is only inconvenient or troublesome. Besides, this is to bring a cure from hell for a natural evil, and to do the Devil's work, under pretence of promoting the honour of God. The malady lies too deep for human power and skill to prevent or cure, for Babel is not only in every fociety, but more or less in every unrenewed heart, and will continually break out in one appearance or another: Nor would a forced uniformity in worship at all mend the matter; it might serve to make

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make many hypocrites, but not to promote the least degree of Christian fellowship, for this stands only in that unity of the spirit, in which is the true bond of peace and love: And therefore, so long as all due submission is paid to the magistrate, and the peace of society is not violated, differences in religion, and different affemblies for divine worship, for conscience fake, ought to be tolerated. The Lord bears with such differences, much more ought we: Besides, we know not what wise ends of providence they may answer in the present state of things, and some perhaps are easy to affign; and therefore we should wait in patience and charity for that dispensation of the Holy Spirit, which in due time will perfect all things, bring us back from the multiplicity of Babel into the fimplicity and unity of concord in the fellowship of the Spirit of peace, and so make us all of one heart and one mind; and then the one universal language will again prevail, and we shall not only think but speak the same things, and all to the praise and glory of God.

Of this glorious dispensation a gracious earnest was vouchsafed to the church at Pentecost, when the apostles were not only all in one place, but of one accord: The Holy Spirit prepared their hearts with grace before he imparted his gifts, for they were at unity with themselves and each other before they were enabled to speak with tongues: And here we may well suppose, that all the effects of mystical Babel, during

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this time, wholly ceased in the apostles; and that the original, univerfal language was restored to them; and that speaking in this, they were understood in the feveral divided languages of those that heard them, as what comes from the root is received in all the branches; and where leffer mufical pipes are inferted into a capital one, the same breath which sounds principally in the larger, does also pipe forth differently in the leffer tubes. This explanation equally answers all the purposes of the hearers, and also to the meaning expressed by their (the apostles) speaking with other tongues; for fo it was in effect, though the root were but one; and this feems to be fignified by the emblematical fiery tongues that rested on the apostles, which were not cloven throughout, but united at the root.

I forbear to apologize for the foregoing digreffion, as well because it may have its use, as because I have been led thereto by offering something in vindication of the authority of the primitive Fathers, as far forth as the weight of their testimony to the millennium might be concerned: And as it was a chief part of their vocation to bear witness to the truth of the Scriptures, and to the double advent of Christ, first to suffer, and secondly to reign on earth, so in this their province they acquitted themselves as men of God well furnished for their work, faithfully executing the same, even with the seal of martyrdom: They were also in possession of the traditions handed down

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to them from the apostles by such as were cotemporary with them, which was a collateral evidence to the truth of this doctrine, and a strong support of their sense of the Scriptures relating thereto; and both Justin Martyr and Irenaus who firmly maintained it, at the diftance only of one remove from the apostle St. John, wrote commentaries on his book of Revelations, which the enemies of this truth have taken care to suppress, as they did every thing elfe in their power, to hinder its being transmitted down to us; but the providence of God fo far watched over this facred deposit in the hands of his church, as not to fuffer it to be totally lost, and will at this time, I doubt not, revive it to the unspeakable joy of his people; and I must own, that every fresh testimony to it gladdens my heart and strengthens that hope and expectation I am fully possessed of, that this glorious truth will shortly triumph over all opposition. The Rev. Mr. Johnson, vicar of great Torrington in Devonshire, published two volumes of Sermons *, in which are some very good ones, with a preface, on this subject: The Rev. and learned Mr. Richard Clarke before mentioned has, according to his uncommon talents in the deep and mystical icience of the heavenly physical powers, expounded many of the typical and figurative rites of the Levitical law, in reference to this doctrine +: The Rev. Mr. Piers, vicar of

^{*} Printed for Rivington in St. Paul's Church Yard, 1740. See his Spiritual Voice, in particular.

Bexley in Kent, has in a late fermon I bore his testimony to the same: And Dr. Gregory Sharpe * replies as follows, to an objection brought against the Fathers on account of their testimony to the milennium: " If we do not " believe that they received this doctrine from " their masters [the apostles] it will be hard to "determine what they received from them, " nor can there be any dependence upon these " primitive men: And how they will answer "this who are unwilling to admit of any mil-" lennium, I can no more conceive than I can " account for their admitting the Revelation of " St. John to be divine, whilft they deny what "that Revelation so manifestly contains; for "the Scriptures expresly declare, that men " are to rife again at two periods, the first is "the refurrection of the just," &c. As it is my defire and usual guard, not to lay more stress upon any argument than it can well bear, fo perhaps an over-caution herein has kept me from doing full justice to the authority of the ancient Fathers in their testimony to this doctrine, by confidering it only in the light of moral evidence; whereas it comes fanctioned to us by that of divine gifts, as appears by their publick appeals both to Jews and heathens; in particular Justin Martyr affures us, that both men and women were endowed with extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost in his time, and instances more especially in

[‡] Printed by Lewis in Pater-Noster-Row.

^{*} Argument in Defence of Christianity, p. 140.

that of prophecy, or expounding the Scriptures by the light of inspiration—Apud nos buculque etiam prophetica extant dona *. But it is eafy to guess how questionable this species of prophecy will appear to the reasoning critic, who allows nothing for divine but what carries with it some evident appeal to the senses; and therefore it is only offered to fuch as are in a dispofition to receive it.

As in this doubting and disputing age we must expect to meet with objections at every step we take, so it may be alledged here, that the testimony of even the most ancient Fathers to this doctrine, however high their characters may be on fome accounts, yet is only that of fingle men, and therefore to be placed to the account of private judgment only; whereas matters of doctrine stand in need of being supported by the authority of the church, which claims to itself the right of interpreting Scripture in fuch matters. To which let it be answered; first, That though this doctrine be of very great importance, vet it is not urged as an effential article of faith: It is offered as highly worthy to be believed, and that on the best authority, for weighty reasons, but not as necessary to falvation; and therefore, though any church should pass over this doctrine in filence, as this will not argue fuch church to be defective in the fundamental articles of faith, fo neither will it argue against

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^{*} Dial. cum Tryphone.

the credibility or importance of this doctrine; feeing, fecondly, it was believed and maintained by the early Fathers, who may, in a very allowable fense, be called the church in their day, as they were the visible builders and supports of it; and the authority of this doctrine is fo much the stronger, as they professed to have received it: Now, what is received by any persons as an article of faith, is more ancient than what is first advanced by them for such: and this will carry back its antiquity to the apostles themselves: But thirdly, neither is this doctrine without the feal of ecclefiastical authority in the fullest sense of it; for it has no less sanction in its favour than that of the first famous council of Nice, called by Constantine the Great, and composed of Bishops from all parts of the Christian world, which not only then fettled the articles of Christian faith, and Canons ecclefiastical, but also set forth certain forms or models of doctrine for the use of the clergy, containing fuch topics as were judged needful for them to infift on chiefly in their difcourses to the people; much in the way and defign of our Homilies published by authority in the reign of Edward VI. Mr. Mede *, to whose learned pains we are obliged for many instructive particulars on the subject of the millennium, has given us an extract of one of these forms on the doctrine of the refurrection, as it is recorded by Gelasius Cyzicenus in his history of the acts of the council of Nice, of

* Mede's works, p. 813. 997

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which I shall here give the following translation, for the fake of the English reader: "This " world [earth] was made the smaller as God " forefaw that man would fin *; wherefore " we look for new beavens and a new earth, " according to the facred Scriptures, wherein " shall be gloriously manifested the kingdom " of the great God and our Saviour Jesus " Christ; and then as Daniel prophesies +, " the Saints of the Most High shall possess the " kingdom: And the earth shall be a pure and " holy habitation; the land of the living and " not of the dead ‡; on the forefight of which, " with the eye of faith, David cries out ex-" ulting: I believe verily to see the goodness of " the Lord in the land of the living |; the land " of the meek and humble; for bleffed are the " meek, for they shall inherit the earth &; and " as the Prophet faith \ : The feet of the meek " and humble shall tread upon it."

* The strength of the conclusion seems to lye here: Almighty God forefeeing man's fall through fin, and that he would thereby entail death on his posterity, made this earth of no greater extent, by reason that death, taking off the feveral generations of the human race successively, would leave its present dimensions sufficient for the number of its inhabitants: Besides, the curse should pass upon this earth, as not being the proper abode of the Saints, for whom is referved by God a better inheritance in Paradife restored; wherefore, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteoufness. 2 Pet. iii. 13.

† Dan. vii. 18. ‡ Matth. xxii. 32. | Pfal. xxvii. § Matth. v. 5. ¶ Isai. xxvi. 6.

The above form of doctrine fanction'd by the council of Nice, or the authority of the facred scriptures, appears as strong a testimony as any ecclefiaftical authority can give to the fense of the Scriptures, in favour of the millennium, or at least of a happy triumphant state of the church on earth, wherein the Saints shall have a bleffed inheritance under the reign of Christ our Saviour; which is all that is here contended for. It is here very observable, that this doctrine, thus transmitted to us, stands upon the same authority as does that of the NICENE CREED; and that this Council interprets that promise of our Saviour, that the meek shall inherit, or possess the earth, into a confirmation of, and identity of sense with the fame prophetical declarations to be found in many places of the Pfalms and Prophets.-See in particular, Pfal. xxxvii. 11. lxix. 36, 37. cxlvii. 6. cxlix. 4. Ifai. xi. 4. xxvi. 6. XXIX. 19.

These, among numberless other predictions of a happy time, when the Saints, and all such as are of a meek, humble, and loving spirit, shall possess the earth, have been a great stumbling-block in the way of those expositors who own no such suture period; but falsely suppose, that all these declarations and promises must have their accomplishment in the present times; and so have strained their invention to find out a sense to these Scriptures, that may some how or other pass with the reader, to make appear that

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that the Saints have the best of it in this life, in a worldly fense of the expression; tho' this be fo contrary to the sense of the Scriptures, and the sense of experience. And here all fuch false interpreters are called upon, to shew when, and where, and how, this ever was the case, from the time of meek Abel down to meek Moses, and so on to the meek and lowly Fesus inclusive: In what sense, during these periods, did the meek possess the earth? I will tell them: They possessed it under contempt, reproach and fufferings of all kinds: They poffessed it as the harmless dove possesses the talons of the cruel vulture in her agonizing heart; or, as the innocent lamb possesses the knife of the butcher in his bleeding throat: And how have things gone fince the time that the good Shepherd came upon earth, to gather unto himself a flock out of every age and nation upon earth, and to lay down his life for his sheep? Why, it has gone with his followers, more or less, as it went with himself, and as he foretold them it would: Their way has been through much tribulation; they have been as sheep in the midst of wolves; or, as Pilgrims passing through an enemy's country, either persecuted and tormented, or, at least, flouted at, and afflicted by the inhabitants of the land: And the same lot is to be expected by all that will live godly in Christ Jesus *, till that bleffed time comes, when the Lord will make up his jewels, and establish a better difference between the righteous and the wicked,

2 Tim. iii. 12.

between him that ferveth God (in spirit and in truth) and him that ferveth him not +. Let us then no more hear of the Saints now possesfing the earth, according to the fense of fuch fallacious expositors, who, in their hearts, defire not to possess it as they now do; nay, with one confent would defire to be excused from entring upon fuch an inheritance, as do all that in this life defire to receive their good things; whereas, the length of days, the ways of pleasantness and paths of peace, together with the riches and honours that are mentioned in Scripture 1, as the portion of true godliness, are not according to their estimate of these things, but are of another kingdom, which the men of this world feek not, nor can have any acquaintance with. The children of Abraham's faith, who are the true heirs of the promises, stand in this life, as it were, with one foot in the land of promife, (the now invifible Paradife, the unmanifested Kingdom of Christ) and with the other on this wretched earth, in which is the curfe; and as, in the former, (in the better part of their nature) they are comforted with the comforts that be of God, at least supported; so, in the latter, they are afflicted, for it is not their home and proper element, but their pilgrimage to a better country: But being the church of the Firstborn, they will have their double portion, even their earthly as well as heavenly bleffings in the new earth that shall be, and they shall

⁺ Mal. iii. 17, 18.

[‡] Prov. iii. 16, 17.

possess the earth: Now, in that good land, is that long life so often promised in Scripture, and is the bleffing annexed to the observance of the Fifth Commandment, stiled by the Apostle, The First Commandment with promise *: Now, as God is faithful to a tittle in all that he promises, and for as much as the promise here given is not fulfilled in this life, according to any fense of a stated rule, it must refer to that good land of promife, wherein the Saints shall possess the kingdom, and the meek and the obedient to parents shall rejoice together +. This

* Ephef. vi. 2.

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+ It is matter of common observation, that the most promiling, pious, and dutiful children are, for the most part, taken away first, and so thus early delivered from the evil to come; or, where this is not the case, that they are generally the least favoured by their parents; and I must own, that my observation through life, made with more than ordinary attention, agreeth thereto: Good children fall under the fame predicament with adults in this matter, and fuffer in proportion; and the reason is, because all things at present are out of course, the foundations are cast down for a time, and the power of evil will prevail against the good, till the administration of the kingdom of this world shall be assumed by the Lord our righteousness, when all things shall proceed according to invariable rules of equity and goodness in his millennial government. Thro' not attending to this, the faints of old were flaggered at beholding the prosperity, power, and longevity of the wicked, (as we read in particular in fob xxi Pfal. lxxiii. Jer. xii.) till they became enlightened with the knowledge of Christ's second advent to reign on earth. David thought to understand this dark mystery of providence by the light of his reason, but it was too hard for him, till he went into the fanctuary of God, the inward fanctuary of divine illumination, in which the ways of God towards men are made

This testimony of the council of Nice, to the doctrine of the refurrection of the Saints to reign with Christ on earth, is of great moment in several respects; if, As it is a standing monument, in the church, of its antiquity, its greater antiquity, for it did not then first enact it as an article to be believed, but adopted it as an article already believed. 2dly, It witnesses to the importance of its being publickly taught, by directing the clergy to inftruct the people in it, amongst the other credenda of religion. 3dly, As it frees this doctrine from the charge of particularism, as tho' it had been received only by a party, or some few in the church. 4thly, It infers a particular providence in favour of this doctrine thus preserved against a powerful party in the church, which endeavoured to stifle it by a continued opposition for more

made manifest and justified. Through not seeing into this fecond part of the great drama of the world, that kingdom to come where all shall be rectified, and wisdom, justice, and goodness have their full display, almost all our reasoners and writers upon the scheme, find themfelves pinched with insuperable difficulties, and unable to explicate the present administration of the government of the world into a confistency with the divine attributes: They have recourse indeed to a future state in heaven, as they must have in order to help them out; but then, this is going beyond their subject, and the sphere of God's providence in this created system, which now, through the fall, confifts of two parts, though they know it not, Paradife loft and Paradife restored, which, in treating this subject properly, must be taken into one view, in order to explain the whole divine economy towards man: But fomething has been already offered on this subject, in the first part of this work.

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than fifty years; notwithstanding which it kept its ground till it was acknowledged by the church in her first œcumenical council under Constantine, anno Domini 325. when the Christian religion became the established religion of the Roman empire. 5thly, It carries with it a reproof for all those, who, in any Christian church, set themselves to oppose or speak lightly of a doctrine so venerable for its antiquity and authority; and the danger of doing this is fo much the greater, as there is reason to fear, that all wilful opposition to it may have a great share in disqualifying such persons for an inheritance in the millennial kingdom, as it is endeavouring to take away from the words of the book of this prophecy *, and so far incurring the dreadful sentence denounced therein. Lastly, From this testimony of the Nicene council, the unlearned, and fuch as are scrupulous (thro' the incompetency or diftrust of their own judgment) of admitting any thing into their creed, but what has received the fanction of the church, may hereby be encouraged to venture on fo fafe a shore, and are enabled to give an answer to every man that asketh them a reason of this hope +; for the climax or ladder of evidence in this matter, is of easy and direct ascent, and supported by the the testimony of Scripture, at the side of it all the way. And therefore, they have their an-Iwer ready at hand: We have received this doc-

* Rev. xxii. 19.

† 1 Pet. iii. 15.

trine of Christ's millennial reign, on the authority of the church, from the ancient and celebrated council of *Nice*, which received it from the earliest of the Fathers, who received it from the Apostles, who received it from Christ, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

It was my intention to have concluded this chapter with the foregoing remarks on the Nicene testimony, but finding that Mr. Mede, in the page following this extract from Gelahus, has likewise preserved an extract to the same purpole from King Edward the VIth's Catechifm, I am unwilling to pass over any testimony to this doctrine that may be found in our own church fo foon after the Reformation. This Catechism was published in Latin by Roval Authority in the last year of King Edward's reign, after he had put it into the hands of fome of the Bishops and other learned men, for their perusal and examination, as appears by the King's letters prefatory to it, which begin thus: " Cum brevis et explicata Catechif-" mi Ratio, à pio quodam et erudito viro con-" scripta, nobis ad cognoscendum offerretur, ejus " pert actationem et deli entem inquisitionem qui-" busdam Episcopis et aliis eruditis commismus, " &c." The paffage is taken from the expofition of the second petition in the Lord's Prayer, and is as follows: " Here we pray, That " his Kingdom may come; for as yet, we fee " not all things brought under subjection to " Christ: We see not how the stone cut out " of the mountain without hands, hath bro-

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" ken in pieces the Image describ'd by Daniel, " that so the stone become a mountain, (by " which Christ is fignified) may take and pos-" fefs the kingdom of the whole world by the " grant of the Father: Nor is Anti-christ de-" stroyed as yet: And therefore in this peti-" tion we pray, that these things may be fulfil-" led, that fo Christ alone may have the do-" minion, and reign with his Saints, according " to the divine promises, and that the govern-" ment of the world may be administer'd in " equity, according to the pure and perfect " dispensation of the holy gospel, and not ac-" cording to the customs and laws of men, " and the arbitrary pleasure of the tyrants " of the earth." The same Catechism treats of the end of this world, according to its prefent form and constitution, to which will succeed the new heavens and the new earth, when (faith the book) will be, " as it is called in "Scripture, the confummation or perfecting " of the kingdom and mystery of Christ, and " the renovation of all things; for it feems a-" greeable to reason, that there should be a " time when this world shall be released from " that state of corruption and changeableness, " to which it is now subjected through fin." It then goes on upon the authority of that prophecy of St. Peter *, concerning the diffolution of the present world, as follows: " The " apostle here intimates to us, that as gold is

² Pet. iii. 15.

"purified by the fire, so this world shall be defecated, and reduced to its primitive perfection by the same means: And in like manner, will man (who is called the Microcosm or little world) be also freed from his present state of mutability and corruption: Thus will this world wear a far more delectable and beautiful form, in its renovation for the sake of man, for whose use it was first created."

I have been the rather induced to translate the above passages at their full length, because it may be reasonably supposed, that this little book is now very difficult to come at, as Mr. Mede, who was in possession of one copy, speaks of it as scarce in his time. Had good King Edward, wife above his years, (whose name this Catechism bears) been spared for a longer blesfing to this land, this doctrine of the Millennium would probably have made its way in the church; but he was early taken off by death, and as all things foon went into confusion, his pious pains to revive it, were not followed by any answerable success. It may be said rather to have been preserved, fince his time, in the church from oblivion, than to have made any advances towards a general reception, and that chiefly by the rifing up of particular witnesses to this scriptural doctrine, now and then, here and there, in the several churches of Christendom, it having nothing to do with any particular systems of belief; and therefore, in all communions of Christians, some have embraced

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raced ced it, whilst the generality in all have been either fo taken up with their feveral church-divisions and controversies in religion relating thereto, or else with the cares, vanities, or pleafures of this world, that they have not allowed themselves leisure to attend to this important subject; but this doctrine is now on the way of recovering its loft credit, and after bearing down all opposition with the force of its evidence, will go on to shine more and more in the light of truth, till the perfect day of its full manifestation at the glorious appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when he shall come to be glorified in his faints, and admired in all them that believe *. And there is the more cause to wish and pray, that this comfortable truth may gain ground, and meet with all good acceptance in the Christian world, not only as faith in the bleffed kingdom may be a means to qualify many for it; but also, as it is the only true key of knowledge to many of the types, promises, and prophecies contained in the Scriptures both of the Old and New Teftament, many of which do refer to it alone, and most have a share therein; and to the taking away of this key it is owing, that so great a part of the Psalms and the Prophets are to this day so little understood, and read to no better edification and meaning; and, in particular, that the book of Revelations is as a book without any revelation in it. If my little talent

^{* 2} Theff. i. 10.

may prove of any use towards this good end, may the Lord have the praise, for so far prospering the work of his most unworthy servant; nor am I without hope, that this well-meaning testimony, though delivered in much weakness, may stir up persons better qualified to do justice to this subject.

MEDITATION.

And is the time hastening on, when Christ the fecond Adam, Son of God and Son of man, shall erect his throne on earth in Paradife restored, and visibly express the hidden glories of the Father in his own facred Person? And was it for this end, that he once vail'd his divinity with the weakness and mortality of our fallen nature, and came amongst us, that he might tread the wine-press alone in garments stained with blood, and redeem a chofen generation to himself, that so he might bring many fons and daughters unto his glory? Think of this, O my foul, with rapturous gratitude, praise and love, and when thou thinkest thereon, strain every power within thee, to shake off thy sloth, and all fondness for the things of a perishing world, that unto thee may be ministred an entrance into the joy of thy Lord. Thou hast too long been holden down by the fear of men like thyfelf, and too often hast thou made snares for thy feet by feeking the favour of the rich and great; and to what has all this ferved, but to cover thee with shame and remorfe, and to leave thee poor

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at last? Be not then any longer the servant of men, to bow down to them for that which cannot profit, and may greatly hurt thee; but hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ without respect of persons, seeking the favour and honour that cometh of God only. Thou hast a Master in heaven, who hath a claim upon thee by right of purchase, whose service is perfect freedom, and who hath promifed, that if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him: Tarry not then in Egypt; make not thy dwelling with Mefech; pitch not thy tent in Kedar; but turning thy back on worldly men and worldly things, take up thy cross and follow thy Master through sufferings to glory: Fear not left thou shouldst walk alone; for though thou leavest by far the greater company behind thee, yet thou wilt overtake, or be overtaken by some Christians of every denomination travelling the same way, most of them indeed despifed of the world, and mean enough as to their outward appearance; but be not ashamed of them on that account, for thou wilt find them men and women fearing God, rich in faith and good works, and having their hearts warm with the love of Jesus: To these thou mayst fafely join thyself, for they are all truehearted, and free from every taint of diffimulalion and felfishness: They will be thy pleasant companions and friendly helpers on the road, and you will take much sweet counsel together. But tho' got thus far, be not high minded but tear, for thy warfare is not yet ended: The people of the world will not let thee escape thus easily, but follow thee with reproach, derifion and perfecution:

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fecution; will represent thee as deluded by a fet of Enthusiasts, and hastening to thy undoing: Nor will the great Adversary of Souls be wanting to practice all his fubtle devices, that he may shake thy faith and constancy, by injecting fears and doubts into thy mind, and laying many temptations in thy way, to discourage thee from going up to take possession of the good land. Nay, to prove what is in thine heart, and for the fuller exercise of thy faith, the heavens shall be black with clouds, and the ways of God's providence feemingly against thee: But fear not, neither be dismayed, but look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was fet before him, endured the cross, and will enable thee to endure it also: Take a view of the promised land with the eye of faith, as did Moses from the top of Pi/gab; so shalt thou be comforted on thy journey at beholding the lot of thine inheritance, that rest which remaineth for the people of God, and where the heavenly harpers on the Holy Hill now wait in readiness to welcome thy arrival with one of the fongs of Sion.

CHAP. III.

Some farther objections to this doctrine answered; and the serious consideration of it recommended, and enforced from the figns of the present times.

S the doctrine of the Millennium appears to strongly founded on the authority of the canonical Scriptures; and the belief of it in the

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first ages of the church is so well supported by the testimony of the primitive Fathers, and the fanction of the council of Nice, no private interpretation of Scripture can stand against it; all opposition from men of whatever name must fall before it; neither will any errors that have been mixt with it, nor any difficulties that may be started against it, be allowed sufficient to set aside the substance of the doctrine, whilst the evidence on which it rests, remains unshaken. Among the many arts practifed, in order to bring any truth into discredit, none is more popular than that of exhibiting it to publick view, joined with the absurd tenets of some that have espoused it, and which is not improperly called dreffing up truth in a fool's coat, on purpose to make it appear ridiculous; and this often fucceeds with the undifcerning vulgar, who judge only by the outward appearance of things. Something has before been offered on this head, in relation to that disparaging comparison made by some betwixt the Millennium and a Mahometan Paradife. I shall only here observe, that this method was taken by Jerom, that great champion of the Anti-chiliast party, in order to load this doctrine with contempt; who accordingly charges it with the fenfual errors of Cerinthus, and the fond conceits of those carnal Jews or judaizing Christians, who supposed that circumcision, and the legal bloody facrifices were to be revived in this new kingdom, thus mixing heretical notions with a gospel-truth, that he might bring it into difgrace; whereas the primitive Fathers (against whom he sets himself in this matter) and likewise all pious Christi-

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ans, did believe in this kingdom of Christ as a kingdom of Saints, not of Epicures, and as a heaven upon earth, wherein righteousness and holiness should dwell. And as to those Jewish fancies concerning the revival of their typical ceremonies, Justin Martyr * expresly declares against it as follows: "Don't think that Iscials. or any other of the Prophets teach, that at Christ's second advent, the blood of vic-" tims and libations will be offered upon an altar, but only the spiritual facrifice of praise " and thanksgiving." This disingenuous dealing of Ferom, Mr. Mede + centures with exclamation: Os Hieronymi! &cc. " O the af-" furance of Ferom, to charge these things up-" on the Millenaries, &c." And yet Jerom, who fo indulged himself at times in ridicule on this ferious subject, was not without his more moderate fits of reflexion thereupon, as appears from his following words quoted by Mr. Mede in the same page, which are introduced with his speaking of the supposed errors of the Chiliasts: Quæ licet non sequamur, damnare non possumus, quia multi virorum Ecclesiasticorum et Martyrum ista dixerunt: Unusquisque in suo sensu abundet, et Domini cuncta judicio reserventur ‡. " Which opinions (though we do " not follow them) we cannot condemn, for-" afmuch as many, both among ecclefiaftical " men and martyrs, have maintained the fame: "Let every one freely enjoy his own fenti-" ment; and let all things be referred to the

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^{*} Dial. cum Tryph. + Page 899. † Com ent. in ferom, cap. 19.

" judgment of the Lord." When Ferom faid this, furely he did not join the doctrine of the Millennium with the errors of Corinthus, for then he must have condemned it here, as well as in other parts of his works. Ferom was a great scholar, and possessed of uncommon talents, but they feem rather to have been human than divine: Simplicity does not appear to have been any distinguishing part of his character; for he is charged with being an unfair relator of the opinions of other men *, when he disliked them: He paid little deference to the authority of the primitive Fathers, being perhaps influenced herein by an overweening conceit of his learning and great abilities; and he is fevere in censuring their allegorical interpretations of the Scriptures, whilft he himself denied the literal sense of the book of Revelations: But the defects, and even erfors of great men, are entitled to allowances of candour: Take him for all and all, and he deserved well of the church, and his praise is in it, for many learned and useful labours.

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Though what has been offered on this subject, in the present work, is abundantly sufficient to free the doctrine before us from the imputation of Novelism; nay, to fix the charge on the unbelieving side; yet it has been said, and probably will be said again, that the church has done very well without it for many centu-

^{*} See Mide's Works, p. 602.

ries, and that to go about to revive it, only tends to disturb its peace, and to introduce difputes: That it is only a matter of speculation. and fo long as we are to be happy hereafter, it is of little consequence, whether this shall be in the way of a gradual process, or all at once: whether in a new state of this world, or by an immediate translation into the bleffed abodes of the eternal heavens; and therefore there is little need to be very folicitous about it. objection confifts of two parts, each of which calls for its answer: And here, in the first place, it will be difficult to fay how well the church has done, without this doctrine, for fo many centuries; and though the times of past ignorance God winked at, yet to this end hath he revealed his truth and his counsels, with refpect to the falvation of men, that they may be known; and if all Scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine and instruction in righteousness +, then we certainly can do better with it than without it; and what Solomon fays in general, will hold good in this particular; that it is not good for the foul to be without knowledge : Besides, as this position argues a lazy indifference touching the truth of man's important interest, much to be ashamed of, so is it as well pleadable against all reformation of doctrine in any church, even in the darkest times of it: And as to that part of the objection that relates to disturbing the peace

† 2 Tim. iii, 16.

† Prov. xix. 2.

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where any part of its peace should happen to rest upon the ignorance of any concerning truth, it is so far to be considered as a salse peace, which ought to be disturbed; and in that case men are to be rouzed from their lethargy, that they may be made to see the things that belong unto their true peace: And as to the matter of angry or causeless disputes, let them look to that who take or make the occasion for them; for truth is in no wise chargeable with consequences that arise only from the abuse of it, or with the perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds.

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Secondly, To represent this doctrine as a matter of mere speculation, the truth of which we need not be folicitous about, is doing great injustice to it, seeing it is highly practical in its tendency and right use, and next to the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, most worthy to be embraced; as it unfolds many dark ænigmas in the course of providence, explains and justifies God's dealings with men, and displays his justice, mercy, and goodness in the kingdoms of this world, thereby supplying increase of matter for our thanksgiving and praise to his adorable majesty: It exalts the character and dignity of our bleffed Saviour, as the repairer of every breach in the fyflem of this world, the Redeemer from every curse, the Reconciler of all things unto God in himself, and the Restorer of Paradise forfeited and lost: It opens a new world of faith, R 2 exhi-

exhibits a ravishing scene of the divine wonders in nature renewed and perfected, and reprefents all things as brought under subjection to him, whom God hath appointed to be King over all the earth: And, lastly, it gives accomplishment to the end for which God created man, making him little lower than the Angels. that he might take his delights with the children of men, and bless them, and that they might worship him in righteousness and true holiness; that so all his works, both in the heavens and under the heavens, might praise These are not speculative niceties, but subjects of high importance and influence, enlarging the heart in love towards God and man, and ferving as fo many incentives to piety of life, and the practice of every relative duty and focial virtue: They fire the heart with an ardent longing to fee the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, and to behold our Saviour and loving Friend on his glorious Throne, diffributing his gifts and bleffings among his redeemed ones; whilst we with our brethren, in our several classes, rejoice together in love and the discharge of every endearing office, free from forrow and free from fin; whilst every spot and blemish of remaining imperfection daily dies away, as we advance towards perfect purity and immortal glory.

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As I am desirous to enrich this work with the sayings of great and good men upon this subject, wherever I find them, I shall here present the reader with the following quotations from

REIGN ON EARTH.

from three very respectable authors. The pious and learned Dr. Knight, late Vicar of St. Sepulchre's, London, in his fermon on the con-Hagration and renovation of the world, among other ends of this renovation, affigns the following, viz. That the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, may be better discerned in his New Works, than they were in the Old, and alfo, that righteoufness may reign and flourish in the new frame and fystem of things; on which occasion he expresses himself thus: "The " spirit of God, which animates the Saints, " will then unite them together under Christ " their Head, in the same knowledge of di-" vine truth; in the fame love and obedience " to God; in the same affection one towards " another; and in the same endeavours to pro-" mote the whole: The Being of God, his " perfections and authority will be fully ac-" knowledged; his laws obeyed with chear-" fulness; his mysteries understood, or receiv-" ed with humility; his justice revered; his " goodness admired, and himself worshipped " in spirit and in truth: The œconomy of the " Word in a body of flesh, and the dignity of " his nature will no longer be matter of con-" tradiction and strife, but confessed in a man-" ner becoming those, who enjoy the redemp-" tion obtained by his blood, and himself be " joined with the Father and Holy Spirit in " the worship and praises of angels and men: " Religion will be pure without hypocrify, vir-" tue without prefumption, love without dif-" fimulation, honour without pride, power R 3 " with-

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without oppression, and knowledge without conceit: No one's abundance will create envy, where every one is full; no man's distinction, where every one is satisfied with his own lot, and selfishness will be lost in the spirit of love."

The devout and felf-denying Mr. Wogan * was a faithful and patient waiter for this bleffed kingdom, and has given us a very comfortable page for the use of the drooping Christian, in that part of his work where he expounds Isaiah lxv. 10. in connexion with Hosea ii. 15. both which chapters are thoroughly prophetic of Christ's peaceful reign on earth. "A " good beginning (will the pious but afflicted " Christian say) I see indeed this valley of A-" chor, which you call a door of hope, but " where is that Sharon, that glorious and flou-" rishing state of the church you speak of? " Above these 1700 years have we waited for " the accomplishment of this divine promise; " but alas! what do we hear or fee, or read " of, but fin and mifery, as well within as " without the church? Not only vanity and " vexation in the things of the world, but la-" mentation, and weeping, and mourning a-" mong the children of God; nay, for the " most part greater and more lasting troubles 66

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^{*} Author of a valuable work in 4 vols. 8vo. intituled, An Essay on the proper Lessons appointed by the Liturgy of the Church of England. See vol. 4. 27th Sunday after Trinity.

" to the disciples of Jesus, than to the carnal " and profane." Answer: "True, O pious " foul; this is the present state and condition " of the church, and hath been so ever since our " bleffed Master ascended into heaven, and " went into that far country, to receive for " himself a kingdom which he had purcha-" fed with his own blood: But we have his " word and most faithful promise, that he " will return and put a final end to all these " complaints; and that he will then change " this miserable scene of fin and forrow into " fongs of triumph and everlasting joy: The " voice of weeping shall then be no more " heard, nor the voice of crying, because fin, " the great and only troubler of the world, " shall then be done away. But when and " how (say you) will this blessed change be? "Why, God himself declares it by his pro-" phet: Behold, I create new beavens and a new " earth: Then shall be that blessed change; " for Christ shall descend from heaven with " power and great glory, to reign with his " Saints upon earth: Then will his church be " a Sharon indeed, and this Achor, or door of " hope, introduce us into everlasting, ever " happy habitations: Till then, let us have " patience, that after having done and fuffer-" ed the will of God, we may receive the pro-" mise: In the mean time, tribulation is our " portion in this present world: But the same " Jesus, who foretold it would so happen, hath " bidden us also to be of good cheer, because R 4

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" he hath overcome the world, and so shall " we, if we faint not."

These good men did not think and speak of this doctrine of Christ's triumphant reign on earth, as a matter of speculation; but it was to them a fund or principle from which they drew much matter of bleffed hope, to support them under the various trials and troubles of life, and to animate them to perseverance in their Christian warfare. And to the same purpose the celebrated Mede, so often referred to in this work, expresses himself on the same subject in one of his private letters: " I find, " fays he, more true contentment in the con-" templation of these things than the greatest " dignities, which ambition so hunteth after, " could ever have afforded me; and I give thanks " to Almighty God, who hath made the light " of these wonderful mysteries to kindle that " warmth in my heart, which I felt not till I " began to fee them, and which have made " me that, which they found me not."

The difficulties that attend our conceptions, on this subject, in many of its parts and circumstances, and which a fertile fancy or a doubting mind can readily raise on every subject, have been improved into a variety of objections to this doctrine; but should we sit down resolved to suspend our assent to every truth, till all the difficulties that the wit of man can entangle it with, be fully satisfied, our Creed will be brought into a very narrow compass;

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nay, perhaps, not one fingle article of it will be able to gain admittance in the course of the longest life; and therefore it is, that the credenda of our religion are propoted to our faith, and not to our reason. Truth (if we except fuch portions of it as carry with them a kind of intuitive evidence) may be compared to a remote object, confisting of different parts and aspects, all of which the eye cannot take in at one view; and even fuch parts of it as will admit of this, will form delufive appearances, if we behold them at an improper distance, or through an unfuitable medium, or if there be any defect in the organs of vision. Now the mind of man, in its present state of weakness, lies under still greater disadvantages, in regard to truths relating to his future state of existence, than the eye in the forementioned circumstances, as well because of the disproportion of its faculties to the nature of the subject, its distance and difference of condition hindering all diftinct perception of it, as also on account of the mists arising from various prejudices, which, like so many false mediums, occasion numberless misapprehensions of it, even in the minds of wife and good men: But this defect in our knowledge is well supplied by the better substitute of faith, for we may believe with affurance what we know in part. However, this may teach us, that it is much more eafy for a person of a shallow understanding, to thart objections on fuch subjects, than for a wifer man to answer them all. It should be deemed

deemed fufficient in cases of this nature for the credibility of any doctrine, that it be supported, as to the substance and reality of it, by a proper authority fuited to the nature of the subject; and as to its different modes and circumstances, it behoves us to be modest in what we have to offer both for and against things that lye so far beyond the reach of the most enlarged capacities. The subject before us lays its claim to this plea; nay, it lays claim to an evidence more diffusive throughout the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, not only typical and figurative, but also literal and express, than perhaps any other doctrine that can be mentioned. Upon this Rock it stands immoveable, and therefore we may be bold to defy all opposition, that mistake, prejudice or false criticism can raise against it. Nor should the difficulties that may attend the confideration of it in some particulars, lessen our faith in this bleffed kingdom, but rather ferve to exalt our estimation of it, seeing the more perfect it is, the farther will the comprehenfion of it lye beyond the reach of our present saculties, as all our ideas are now borrowed from nature in degeneracy: Besides, it is unreasonable to make the want of adequate ideas, an objection to the reality of paradifal glory, whilft we allow it to be none against the blessedness of the angelical kingdom, which we all hope for, and still far surpasses the former; a happy state, in nature renewed, we can form some imperfect judgment of, but it cannot enter in-

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to the heart of man to conceive the blis prepared for the children of God in the highest heavens. It has, I think, been fully proved, that we have abounding promifes and prophecies of a future happy state of the church on earth, and these are the main of its evidence; and the same is more or less distinctly reprefented in Scripture under fundry types and allegories, which may be confidered as a chain of leffer testimonies continued through the facred Canon: Now, if in this thread of revelation running from the beginning to the end of our Bible, and croffing fuch a rich variety of important subjects, we should here and there find fome knots which we cannot eafily untie; fuch difficulties must be allowed common to it with other material articles of faith, which the Scriptures treat not according to man's art and method, but hold forth for the exercise of a refigned faith, and not to gratify an officious curiofity: And as to any difficulties that may arise from a philosophical view of this subject, they will appear to carry no weight of obligation with them, when we confider, that, in this renovated state of the world, the powers of nature will be changed, and a new system of its laws and properties take place, through a breaking forth of the heavenly-physical powers, which will be the working and governing principles in outward nature, for paradife has its root and ground in heaven, and is only a more fenfible manifestation of it in a lower sphere; and therefore to let up our mechanical philosophy as the test of

what is possible or impossible in nature restored, is just as wife, and to as good effect, as to put on spectacles to see what is transacting in the moon. It was from an over-attachment to fuch a strait-laced philosophy, that an author before mentioned in this work, cries out, A paradox! upon hearing of a supposed communication betwixt the raifed and living Saints in the millennial kingdom, though the Scriptures not only authorize, but evince the fame truth in Beings far more distant in condition of existence, viz. betwixt the blessed angels and frail men: And I must own, that it presents itself to my mind as a highly pleasant theme, to think how the peaceful abodes of holy men and women will then be bleffed at times with unexpected visits from the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Worthies of old times, to hold loving discourse together on the things of God, and the delightful subject of redeeming love: Nay, what room have we to doubt, whether the holy Angels from heaven will not take their turn in fuch friendly interviews, and converse as familiarly with men, (though less disguised) as Raphael did with Tobit and his family.

But if the philosopher will needs be wise in the things of another world, let him clear his way as he goes, and first be wise at home. And here, to begin with the most obvious things, let him explain the greenness of the grass, the saltness of the sea, the cause of the different qualities in vegetables, and what are their specific powers: Nay, let him explain himself, -

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the progress of his own formation and growth in body and mind; the union and reciprocal actions of foul and body, and the generation of his thoughts: Let him then proceed to give us a perfect natural history of animals, minerals and fossils, and to explain the planetary influences and the nature of fire: Then let him pass on from the kingdom of nature to that of providence, and lay open the hidden mysteries of the divine economy in the government of the world, and reconcile all the parts of its administration with the perfection of God's attributes; but here also he will find the task too hard for him, and that his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out. Now, if there is so much darkness in the things that are before us, how modefly should we judge of those which as yet do not appear? The ways of God, in every system of creation, are a great deep, which we can only fee into by the light he gives; and therefore, instead of turning difficulties into objections to any part of his works, it will become us better to learn a lesson of humility from the ignorance that belongs to us.

I might here properly take my leave of objections, to pursue my way through what remains to be offered on this subject; but there is one which looks it so full in the face, and has been so much insisted on by opposers, as inconsistent with, if not contradictory to the description given us of this happy country, that must not be passed over in silence; I mean

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the armies of Gog and Magog, spoken of in Rev. xx. which went up against the Saints to make war against them. Here is an innumerable company of wicked Beings brought upon the stage of the new earth, which was destined to be the habitation of the Saints, and leaguing together for their destruction: Now, how came they there, and what hopes could they form of fuccess from so rash an enterprize? It might be fufficient here to reply; that where a prophecy comes evidenced to us by divine authority, we are not to reject the substance of it, because of our ignorance how fome particulars relating to it may stand together; that predictions of this kind feldom contain a detail of modes and circumstances belonging to the plan, but only acquaint us with the main event; and that it is enough for us to know, that as the administration of the kingdom will be in the hands of the Son of God, he will be well able to fecure the felicity of it against all attempts from his enemies: But the Rev. Mr. Johnson before mentioned, in the Preface to his first volume of Sermons, has untwisted this knot in a way which merits our attention; and if it be objected to as a mere hypothesis, I shall only say, that where reason sets itself to invent objections to a Scripture-doctrine, a reply founded on a reasonable supposition, should be deemed a sufficient answer, as the authority of the latter is as good as that of the former. Mr. Johnson * supposes, that " as

^{*} He does not take to himself the credit of this hypothesis, but adopts it.

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" a great part of the world never heard of " Christ, and yet the gospel of the kingdom " was to be preached in all the world for a " witness to all nations; so such of them as " have died in ignorance of the Christian dif-" pensation, will be raised from the dead to " have a time of probation allowed them in " the uttermost parts of the earth, in a condi-" tion fuited to their state; and shall have the " gospel preached to them by Emissaries from " the kingdom: That many of them will be " converted and established in grace, and have " their portion with the Elect; but that a " great number of them will be feduced by "Satan, on his enlargement at the end of the "thousand years; will invade the kingdom, " and be destroyed by fire, as mentioned in " the Revelations." Such a supposed dispensation of grace and trial as this, vouchfafed to the poor heathens, does certainly, in the eye of human judgment, fet the divine proceedings towards the human race, upon a foot of nearer equality in mercy, enlarges our conceptions of God's goodness, assigns greater extent of efficacy to the Christian sacrifice, the Redeemer's blood, and removes that rock of offence, and abomination of a system, which excludes the far greater part of Adam's fallen offipring from all benefit in the covenant of grace established by God in Christ, the second Adam, who tasted death for every man, without excepting one fingle individual. Mr. Johnson allows, that fuch a purpose of mercy in God towards the heathen world, is not expresly or par-

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particularly revealed in the Scriptures, and he quotes the two following probable reasons as figned for it from Staynoe's Treatise of Salvation: "First, Because this resurrection and "probation of the Gentiles does not concern those who have the Scriptures, as by these they may come to the knowledge of the Sawiour, which is as much as concerns them: And, secondly, Had this resurrection and probation been put into the Scriptures, yet those who had them not, could have known nothing of the matter in this life, and so as to them it had been put into the Scriptures in vain."

Though Mr. Johnson's foregoing account of Gog and Magog, be only offered as a probable interpretation of that dark passage, yet it derives credibility from the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel, chapters xxxviii, and xxxix, who are there represented as the heathenish nations and enemies of Israel, whose destruction is there foretold to be with great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. If by these we are to understand ungodly Heathens in the present world, they may be confidered as a type of the Gog and Magog mentioned in the Revelations; if they mean the same, they are a proof of the point in hand; however, there are circumstances in the account which the prophet gives of them, that lead us to take them in the former fense, and among others that mention, which the Prophet makes of many people in confederacy with Gog, who shall partake in his punishment; and he

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is not here a word of threatning for the false Christians, who, though they take to themselves the name of Israel, yet are not of the true Israel of God, but Ishmaelites in nature, men of a heathenish spirit, and oft times more than heathenish in their lives, who join with the Gog and Magog of this world to oppress and persecute the true children of faith: Far worse will it go with them who now so hold the truth in unrighteousness, than with the poor blind Gog and Magog, who may obtain mercy for what they now do in ignorance and unbelief, and have their lot for probation in the first resurrection, whilst the apostate children of the kingdom shall be cast out, and have their lot where is weeping and gnashing of teeth *. The exposition here given of this mysterious passage in favour of the gentile world, gives occasion here to remark; that it is not necessary to suppose, that the whole plan and purpose of Gods mercy, in the full extent of it, is expresly declared in the writings of the New Testament; and that because of the ill use that many would make of such a discovery, and thereby disqualify themselves for it. Our Lord tells his disciples: I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now +; and of the great abundance of things revealed to Efdras, some he was commanded to publish openly, and some (70 out of 204 books) he was to deliver only to fuch as were

^{*} Matth. viii. 12.

⁺ John xvi. 12.

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wise among the people *; giving us hereby to understand, that there are different kinds and measures of truth suited to different persons and times of the church; and though Fesus Christ, the fountain of truth, and the foundation of all God's mercies to man, be fufficiently revealed in Scripture for the falvation of all, yet this hinders not our divine Teacher from communicating out of the rich treasures of his wisdom, to certain among his faithful servants in every age of the church, many precious and rare discoveries, both through the Scriptures, and by the immediate teachings of his Spirit, not only for their own use, but also for the benefit and comfort of fuch among their brethren, as are in a disposition to receive them. I cannot end this fection without observing, that the foregoing explication of Gog and Magog, feems to me confirmed by Rev. xxi. 24. where speaking of the glory of the new Yerufalem which should need neither Sun nor Moon, as having the Lamb for the light thereof, it is added: The nations [Heathens] of them which are faved, shall walk in the light of it, fignifying hereby, that though the Gentiles will not be admitted, during their state of probation, to inhabit the new Jerusalem, that metropolis of the bleffed Kingdom, but have their residence at a remote distance from it, yet so diffusive will be its splendor, that they shall receive benefit from it; and as it will yield un-

REIGN ON EARTH. 259 to them bodily light, fo doubtless likewise that which is spiritual, by the divine teachings of those who shall be sent from this city of the Great King, for their instruction in godliness.

Under this article of Gog and Magog, there remains one objection to be confidered, and that the rather, as it has been urged as an abfurd paradox against the belief of the Millennium +: The author, whose paradox it is, delivers himself as follows: "Who can think "that the malice of these men should so far " exceed their wit, as that knowing by daily " experience that these raised and glorious " Saints are immortal and impassible, they " should yet hold it safe, or possible to oppose " them with any hope of fuccess." The objector here takes for granted what we allow not, viz. that all the bleffed Saints of this kingdom are fuch as were raised from the dead in glorified bodies; whereas we hold, that many who are alive at Christ's second advent, will pass into this happy state, and though their material bodies will be exalted to high degrees of purity, differently according to their different classes, yet many of them, at least, will wait therein till their final change from mortal to immortal shall come to pass in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump. Secondly, It does not appear, that this army of Gog and Magog will be fo well acquainted with the invincible

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power and fafety of the Saints, as he supposes, (any more than the Devil was with the Divinity of our Saviour when he tempted him) for they are represented as dwelling in the four corners or extremities of the earth, and fo beyond the sphere of manifested paradise. thirdly, As to the madness of their enterprize, we are no ways answerable for that: They are faid to be deceived by Satan, and people that are deceived must be supposed in an error; and how far they might be feduced to believe, that being joined by the powers of darkness, they might be a match for the Saints, we know not; however, this we know, that fin is of an infatuating nature, and deprives fuch as are under the power of it of all right judgment, otherwise we should not hear of the Dragon and his Angels fighting against the strength of God; nor of our first parents disobedience; nor yet fee wicked men live as they do, in defiance of God's laws and threatnings.

As many are the objections which have been raised against the doctrine of the Millennium, so not a sew are the prejudices which indispose men for the reception of it: And here the strong delusions of many both among Jews and Christians about the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, together with their impostures and enthusiastic attempts to establish it upon earth by human means, have had much effect this way. The Fanatics of Munster soon after the reformation, and the Fifth-Monarchy men in England in the last century, as men-

mentioned before, are well known instances of this kind, who, by their scandalous riots and rebellions, did all in their power to render the doctrine itself obnoxious to civil government. Of the like class was Sabatai Levi, the Jew, who about a century ago at Smyrna, and other parts of the East, drew after him many deluded followers among that people, pretending that he was the Messiah: As also about the same time one John Roth in the Low Countries, who got ready standards for the twelve tribes of Ifrael, which, he faid, he was to re-establish; and he also imposed upon some credulous people; but one of the chief of these adventurers, who gave out that he would behead all the Kings of the earth, and begin at England, set fail in a little bark, and was no more heard of, which put a stop to their knight-errantry. Thus does the grand Deceiver go through the world, seducing the minds of sensual and credulous men with false semblances of the truth, that so he may bring it into disgrace with such as are weak in judgment; but we are not ignorant of his devices, nor unprovided against them; for he that hath given us found doctrine, is always ready to give us the spirit of a found mind, that we may be able thereby to distinguish truth from its counterfeit; and indeed fuch pretenders to reformation in Israel, are eafily known by their fruits, for the ambition and worldly-mindedness that so evidently appeared in these disturbers of government, plainly shewed them to be very unfit instruments to make ready a people prepared for the S 3

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Lord; whereas the true children of the kingdom are of an humble mind, much dead to the things of this world, and waiting in patient hope till the Lord Jesus from heaven shall build up Sion, and make his glory to appear, not by human policy or carnal weapons, but by a convincing display of his divine power; and they are obedient to their superiors in all things lawful, giving honour to whom honour is due; and the Spirit of truth which guides them, is also the Spirit of peace within them; and therefore they cannot fow the feeds of division in church or state, being against no order that is not contrary to God's order, enemies to no peace, but that false and fatal peace which is of the world, the flesh and the devil, leading to destruction: Out of this they call their brethren with a friendly warning, not into any fect or party, but into that kingdom of righteourness and holiness, where the Prince of Peace is King, and into that fellowship of the Spirit with the Father and the Son, and with all Saints, in which the true unity is to be found. These are the persons to whom the promise is made of being the happy subjects of Christ's glorious kingdom upon earth, and from these we may expect the fullest discoveries, and the clearest knowledge of the Scriptures concerning it. I shall here dismiss this part of the work with the following exhortation to the candid reader.

It was an usage in the primitive church, at least as old as Tertullian's time, and mentioned by

by that Father, for Christians to pray, Ut partem haberent in prima resurrectione, that they might have part in the first resurrection; and as they believed that Martyrs were entitled by promise to a certain distinguished lot of inheritance in that kingdom, the over-forwardness of fome in those days to embrace martyrdom is hence accounted for. But how is the case altered with us now, when the greater part either dispute the truth of a first resurrection, or at least treat it as an useless doctrine? But, dear reader, can any thing be useless that God hath so plainly revealed in his written word; nay, can any thing want great importance, that Christ hath done or purchased for us? Who can tell what changes and revolutions, what progress in discipline and purification may be requifite for a foul to pass through in its way to the courts of the most high God, and to qualify it for the beatifick vision? All nature has its regular and gradual process towards perfection, even in the most simple weed that grows upon the earth; and how much more may we suppose it costs to redeem a soul, and to conduct it to the complement of its full falvation! Few perhaps are fo well fatisfied with their state at the time of their departure out of this life, as to think themselves already so far perfect, as that nothing more remains to be done, or done away in them, but that they are already qualified for the joys of Angels, and meet for the fruition of the glory of God. Some like doubts and fears may happen to the best of men at that time, and perhaps to such S 4

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the oftnest: And, under these uneasy thoughts, I think it may afford no fmall confolation to their minds, to have this anchor of hope, that though they are not as yet fitly prepared to enter into the palace of the great King, yet there is a place referved for them at the marriagesupper of the King's Son, where they will be welcome guests, and partake of a blessed inheritance with the Saints in his kingdom, when every thing in them that offendeth shall be done away, and every thing that is yet lacking shall be supplied, till they are changed from glory to glory into the condition of just men made perfect. Forbear then, my dear reader, to call this an useless doctrine, or to think it a light matter whether thou believest in it or not, for it is an article of precious faith and a fund of joyful hope, that will stand by thee in many a trial and trouble: It will keep thee from fretting thyself because of the ungodly, and from being envious against the evil doer whose way doth now prosper, knowing that yet a little while and the ungodly shall be clean gone, and then the meek shall possess the earth, and be refreshed in the abundance of peace *. And here thou art presented with a glorious view of the triumphs of godliness, and of Christ's sovereignty on earth: He declared indeed just before his ascension, that all power was given him in heaven and in earth; but he hath deferred taking into his hands the administration of his kingdom, as to the vifible part of it, till old things shall pass away, and all things become new. In the mean time, he fuffers the reign of Antichrist to run out its full period, and the God of this world with his powers of darkness to bear rule for a time; and he continues patient though he be provoked every day: But when the time appointed of the Father is come, and he hath accomplished the number of his elect, he will gather his Saints together, and thus royally attended, he, who is called Faithful and true, with a name written on his vesture and on his thigh, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS +, shall appear gloriously in the heavens as the Rider on the white horse, coming forth conquering and to conquer : The whole earth shall stand in awe of him; his enemies shall fall before him; and his advent shall be proclaimed with shouting: " Tell it out among " the heathen, that the Lord is King: Let " the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be " glad; for he cometh, for he cometh to " judge the earth, and with righteousness to " judge the world, and the people with his " truth ||." How does this winding up of providence fet all things right, and extricate the mind from innumerable perplexities concerning the course of things in this present evil world! How does the opening of this wonderful scene to the eye of faith, spread light upon the Scriptures and rejoice the heart! And how does every system of divinity that owns it not,

+ Rev. xix. † Rev. vi. 2. Pfal. xcvi. involve

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involve itself in darkness and difficulties insuperable! Reader, if thou hast faith in this matter, keep it as a choice treasure and lose it not; and I am the more earnest in this exhortation, as it has been to me a cordial in much affliction, and is now, under God, the staff of my declining age, nor will I let go my hold of it for all that this world has to give or take away: But there is a reason of far greater weight for my recommending to thee the ferious confideration of this subject with an affectionate zeal, viz. because the figns of the present times throughout the world, feem to give strong indications that the providence of God is now big with some grand event, and that we are at the eve of an awful crifis: Be it so or otherwife, it behoves us to be as men waiting for their Lord, when he shall come to the marriage; and he who believes that the time of his coming is nigh, has certainly a strong additional motive to preparation and watchful-We have too long gone on criticizing and disputing upon religion, till very little of it is left amongst us, and the greater part scarcely know where they are, or what they believe; nay, many band together in wicked affociations and clubs to fortify themselves in unbelief: But cast not in thy lot with such, for death and hell are in their paths. If thou art yet wavering and unfettled in thy mind, chuse the fafer fide of godliness, for the best that the bad man has to hope for, is the worst that the good man has to fear; and when his false hope and refuge of lies shall fail him, as it certainly will, how

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how dreadful is his lot! If thou hast but a grain of faith, or even a willing and defirous mind to believe (with a heart in any good degree weaned from the love of the world) pray unto the Lord, and he will have compassion on thee, to help thy unbelief; and then will enable thee to go on from faith to faith, and from strength to strength till thou shalt appear before God in Sion. I fay not this to engage thy affent to this doctrine in particular, only let it have its due weight of evidence with thee in common with others; it is for thy interest and comfort I am speaking; and if thou can'ft believe with thy heart in the Lord Jesus Christ, as he who is ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead *, and the author of falvation to all them that obey him +, having thy heart established in grace for obedience to this faith t, thou shall receive the end of thy faith, even the falvation of thy foul ||.

^{*} Acts x. 42. † Heb. v. 9. ‡ Rom. i. 5. | 1 Pet. i. 9.

The Signs of the Times.

S about the time of our Saviour's nativity, there was an expectation among the Jews of the Messiah's coming, though without any certainty as to the exact time of it, except in some few holy waiters for the Confolation of Israel, to whom it was revealed: So likewise, that his approaching second advent, when he shall come to take possession of his kingdom, will be revealed to fome, is not to be doubted: Besides, there is a kind of divine fagacity in the minds of some men, which gives them impressions of things to come; and perhaps no remarkable event ever happened in the world (history affords us many instances of this) of which some had not presentiments more or less distinct; nor should we be so backward to admit the agency of the divine Spirit on the human intellect, but for a fashionable scepticism in divinity, which teaches men now a-days to question the truth of every thing supernatural fince the first age of the It is worthy of remark, that for about a century past, the belief and expectation of Christ's millennial reign on earth have prevailed more (as to what appears) than in thirteen hundred years before; and that many learned and pious men of different churches and nations, have agreed with wonderful confent touching the approximation of this great event; though it must be confessed, that such among them as have employed great talents in endea,

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endeavouring to explicate and apply the prophetic iconisms and numbers thereto, have not succeeded according to their expectations. The great and good Mr. Mede, who for heart and head was perhaps exceeded by few in his time, undertook to explain the Apocalypse by a system of his own framing (though perhaps no book of the facred Canon is less reducible to such a methodical plan) in which he fets up Rome imperial or papal, as the mark and scope of all the prophecies relating to the beaft, the whore, the false prophet, and Babylon the great, and empties every vial of its plagues upon her head: And though he often found himself embarrassed by the straitness of his scheme, to find out fuitable events and circumstances in the history of Rome, and to accommodate and time them answerably to the prophetic visions, yet it must be owned, even where he was most pinched, that his wonderful invention and the dextrous management of his learning, helped him to draw likenesses in miniature, which shew an exquisite imagination; he was often forced to take up with petty events in history as he could find them, which bore no proportion to the grandeur of prophecy; but then no man could make more of them than he did; and he feldom fails to please with an air of plausibility, even where his interpretations can by no means fatisfy: He walked in fetters of his own forging, and yet he walked better in them than most could without them; he was an excellent expositor where the literal sense of the Scripture is only concerned, but where it holds forth a mystical

a mystical or spiritual meaning, he generally falls short of the dignity of the subject: To in. stance only in his exposition of the inner court or temple, which St. John was ordered to measure together with them that worship therein, Rev. xi. 1. This inner court or temple he expounds of the visible state of the church during the first 360 years of it, before it became corrupted by an impure worship *; whereas all spiritual writers interpret it of the mystical body of Christ, his living members who worship the Father acceptably in spirit and in truth, as distinguished from nominal Christians fignified by the outward-court worshippers, who have the form of godliness without the power thereof, a name that they live, but are dead +: The former are called in Scripture God's building I, and the temple of the living God ||; and they are to be measured by John with a reed of the sanctuary for a place in the New Yerufalen; whereas the latter, which fay they are Tews [true Israelites] and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan §, are ordered to be left out of the measurement, as being of no account in the fight of God. Mr. Mede's construction of this paffage confounds the inner and outer court-worshippers, during the primitive times, under one and the same denomination, though they were as distinct then as at any time fince; and not only fo, but it leaves the church destitute of an inner court during the time of her

^{*} Mede's works, p. 558. † 1 Cor. iii. 9. | 2 Cor. vi. 16. | § Rev. ii. 9.

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apostacy or declension, whereas the Lord never leaves himself without witnesses, even in the most corrupt times of the most corrupt church, but has a remnant or feed to glorify him, even holy men and women, connected indeed in vifible communion with the outer court-worshippers, but of a very different order, and precious in the fight of God: These constitute the invisible church, fignified by the woman in the wilderness, and are the children of a mysterious birth, having a white stone given them, and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth, fave he that receiveth it *; they are truly strangers and pilgrims upon earth, lightly accounted of by their brethren that are in the flesh, persecuted of Satan, but preserved of God, till the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, at the resurrection of the just.

As the prophetic iconisms or images of the subsequent state of the church, and of remarkable events to happen therein, have been hitherto unfolded with little perspicuity, nay, much uncertainty of interpretation; so neither has it gone better with the prophetic numbers. Many men of learning and piety, who have been strong in the faith of Christ's reign on earth, and had their hearts warmed with the hopes of its near approach, have fet themselves diligently to enquire, at what particular time this great revolution would take place; and

^{*} Rev. ii. 17.

among others Alstedius, Archer, Brightman, and Beverly in the last century, formed their calculations, most of them agreeing that it would happen about or before the year 1700. As the event happened not according to the predictions given, all computations of this kind have fallen into difgrace with many, even to the hardning themselves against any other warnings of it that may be given, though this is making an ill use of the mistakes of well-intentioned men, who hang out the best lights they have for the caution and fafety of their brethren: Besides, great allowance is to be made for errors in chronological disquisitions of this kind, as the mystic numbers in Scripture are involved in much obscurity; nor is it always easy to adjust with exactness the epocha or first punctum of time, from whence the calculation is to proceed, as is the case in particular in that famous prophecy of Daniel's seventy weeks: Nor are we rashly to pronounce such to be false prophets (if men fearing God) who fix a time for the accomplishment of scriptural predictions, though the thing foretold does not come to pass at that particular time, seeing they may, for what we know, have proceeded rightly according to the fense of the letter or number given in Scripture, as we know not with what referves of mercy prophecy may be delivered, and the completion of it haftened or delayed in fubserviency thereto, as happened in the case of Nineveb: And our Lord tells us, that the days of the last tribulation shall be shortened

for the elect's fake *. Whether there may not be fomething in the spiritual world analogous to the virtue of magnetism in outward nature, that attracts the attention of ferious men to the confideration of momentous changes shortly to come to pass, I will not take upon me to determine; yet I must own, that the expectation of fo many in the last century (as was observed before) of the Messiab's approaching kingdom, weighs more with me to strengthen my faith in it, and to direct my thoughts the same way, than any errors in their calculations as to the precise time of it, to produce any contrary effect. That so many writers on this subject (though I have met with very few of their writings) of different persuasions in other things, hould fo agree in pointing their calculations towards the commencement of the present century; and that publick witnesses in the church should now appear for the same truth, sacrificing to this testimony of Jesus all worldly hopes, looking for complete redemption in Ifrael as drawing nigh, and encouraging their brethren to forfake the Egypt of an apostate world, to hasten in preparation unto the coming of this day of God; (and many more such witnesses I believe will shortly appear) these things laid together carry in them a lesson of warning not to be despised or neglected, but listened to as a voice crying to the people of England in their present wilderness-state; Repent, for the kingdom of beaven is at hand !

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^{*} Matth. xxiv. 22.

And it will become us better and behove us more, to examine into our state, to see what manner of persons we are, and to prepare the way of the Lord in our hearts, that so we may be found clothed in the true wedding-garment at his coming to the marriage, than to criticife and cavil on the words of the message, or to turn into ridicule those that deliver it. But we are given to expect, that as it was heretofore in the days of Noah, fo it will be now: The interests, pleasures, and vanities of this world will harden the hearts and stop the ears of many against the loudest calls to repentance: And as to the Babylonian merchants of this day, whether they trade in purple and fine linen, in places of honour or places of profit, or in merchandise brought from far; whether they carry on their traffick in the church, the state or the change; whilft their hearts are glewed, nay, rivetted to the world through the love of it, what trumpet can awake them? What thunder can alarm them? What earthquake can shake them? What witness can persuade them? What woe can convert them?

Most of us are apt to look towards Rome only for the signs of the times, as if that were the sole residence of Anti-christ and his family; and as though, for a token of his destruction, we were first to see the walls and battlements of that city and church tumble down, as did those of Jericho aforetime, at the sounding of the rams horns: But look around thee, spectator, and thou shalt see Anti-christ and his retinue

tinue also behind thee and on each hand of thee; and beware left he be not also within thee : Thou mayst know him by his false pretences to the truth, or by his opposition to the truth as it is in Christ Jesus; as likewise by his other marks and characters: He is the beaff in the natural, fensual man, and the red dragon in the man of persecution; he is the serpent in the fly deceiver and fubtile hypocrite; the false prophet in the lying lip of interpreting the Scriptures; he is the whore in those that commit fornication with the civil powers and great ones of the earth for filthy lucre-fake, having mens persons in admiration, because of advantage; and Babylon the Great, which are the kingdoms of this world, is the throne of his power, where he vends his false wares and distributes his favours to those that have received the mark of the Beast on their foreheads; for in this generality of extent is Babylon described in Rev. xviii. 3. But let no one use this as a pretence for not paying respect and obedience to persons in lawful authority and to government, for this is the ordinance of God, (however the enemy may flip into it) and we must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake: Nay, mystical Babel is in the root of our fallen nature, and born into the world with us all, which the spirit of Christ alone can cast out; and therefore if we diligently examine ourselves, we shall all, or almost all, find more or less of this cursed thing in our tents. woes therefore denounced in Scripture on the T 2 foregoing

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foregoing characters are not limited to any particular place or fociety of men, but are commensurate to the extent of those characters every where. Rome will doubtless drink, and deeply too, of the cup of fuffering, for all her worldly-mindedness, persecutions, and other abominations; and all the impenitent and ungodly in every other church must pledge her in the same; but praised be God! for many, very many fons and daughters both in her and them, among high and low, of every tribe and class, that shall be redeemed from Babylon *, a goodly number which no man can number ordained to glory, and to be the joy of the whole earth. It does not appear that the most corrupt part of Christendom shall be first in the visitation of wrath, nay, we are told that judgment must begin at the house of God +, which, taken in a mystical sense, means the spiritual or true, inner-court-worshippers; or if it be applied to the greater purity of doctrine and constitution in any outward church, and we lay claim to this character in a distinguished sense as belonging to us; in this case we should do well to look at home first for the figns of the times, and to beware, left we be found no better than reprobate filver in the house of the Lord, when he comes to make up his jewels.

Among the figns of the times preceding the kingdom of Christ triumphant, we may reckon

^{*} Micah iv. 10.

the witnesses of its approach, sent forth as heralds to proclaim the advent of the great King. Now these will be different both in the kind and degree of their testimony, according to the difference of their light and talents, and to their nearer or more remote distance from the period we are speaking of. Some will appear in this office under more general and confused apprehensions of the time as drawing on, without any thing distinct or clear concerning it; and these may be considered as an inferior fort of harbingers preparing the way at a distance: And others will fee it with a sharper fight, but being hurried on by an over-hafty zeal and confidence, will be apt to overlook the intermediate space as nothing, and so think and speak of it as just upon the point of commencing; as was the case with some in the last century, and about the beginning of this. Some will give their testimony in the way of rational deductions from the literal sense of the Scriptures compared with the state of the times as therein foretold; and this method of treating the subject will be best suited to the apprehensions of the generality, who are more in the sphere of external knowledge: Others will be led to explicate the prophetical emblems and numbers, adjusting them to remarkable events and revolutions in the kingdoms of this world, and forming calculations thereupon, and generally not without some mistakes arising as well from the imperfection of human knowledge, as also from their inferior part, not yet sufficiently defecated and enlightened: And fome

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fome few, initiated in this kingdom of God in a mystery, and favoured with an inward experience of its heavenly powers, of both fexes (for male and female are one in Christ) will be raifed up to preach the kingdom and its nigh approach in a declarative or prophetic Stile; and though their testimony will be rejected by those who admit of no truth, but as offered in the common methods of argument and proof, yet it will be held precious by fuch as are in a disposition to receive it in the way of faith. But here a word of caution feems necessary; that no man run before he be fent, nor take to himself this office without being called to it, mistaking the sallies of a warm imagination, or the impulses of a natural zeal, for the motions of the divine Spirit: All the propensions of felf-will, and even the defire of defignation to this office thould be jealously watched over as fo many hindrances to any fuch vocation, for they are not the forward and bold, but persons of humble minds and a mortified spirit, whom the Lord delighteth to honour in this way; not fuch as feek it of themselves, but such as are fought out of him for it; not the wife of this world, but the children of simplicity, for these are the babes to whom he revealeth his fecrets.

The learned Bengelius, I am told, has published calculations of the times when this world shall end, and the millennial kingdom begin, but I have not seen any of his works; and as I am not skilled in such calculations, so neither have I any thing to offer in the way of prediction,

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diction, believing only in general, that we are very near the time of this great crisis; that the figns of it do evidently appear; that the woes which are to usher it in, are just going to break forth; and that many persons who have already passed the meridian of life, will not taste of death till they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven. The Rev. Mr. Richard Clarke * supposes that the first sabbatical year will open before 1766: His calculations are certainly ingenious, at least, and particularly more adapted to the types and figns of times under Moses, and a short time will shew if they are strictly just; tho' I must own that the preparatory work, both as to grace and judgment, appears not to me far enough advanced for fo speedy an accomplishment, and that some events foretold in the Scriptures yet to take place, feem too big to be included within that compass; however I am inclined to think, that within that limited period, the figns of the last times will come on fo thick and striking, as to claim the ferious attention of the publick to the warnings of that friendly Monitor. What space of time, more or less, may be sufficient for finishing the effusion of the vials described in the Revelations, for the conversion of the Jews that are to be the first-fruits of that people, and for other subjects of prophecy not yet fulfilled, cannot be precifely determined; however that of the two witnesses mentioned in Rev. xi. if

^{*} See his Prophetical Numbers of Daniel and John, and his Feast of Trumpets, p. 100.

to be understood in a personal character, shoot beyond this mark, allowing that the 1260 days affigned for the time of their ministry, mean only natural days, which I suppose they do in this place. Many of the prophecies have both a myflical and a literal fense, and accordingly a double completion, and therefore the giving a personality of character to these witnesses, sets aside no other testimony against the apostacy or corruption of the church, which Mr. Clarke and some other learned authors suppose to be meant thereby: Besides, the speciality of number, the personal acts that are ascribed to them, what is said of their dead bodies, and their restoration to life, and many other particulars, feem to make for this interpretation: Nay, it was a common belief among the Fathers of the church, that Enoch and Elias were to be these two last embassadors to the world, for its warning and conversion; and Ephrem Syrus in particular fays *, that before the end of the world, " The Lord will " fend Enoch and Elias [Elijah] the Tishbite " to preach righteousness to all mankind, and " to guard them against the delusions of Anti-" christ," which he supposes will at this time assume a body of slesh, lord it over the earth, and seduce a great part of it to his obedience; and the description of his reign, and the miseries he will bring upon mankind, as given us by this Father, and also by Hippolytus and Lactantius, are enough to make one tremble; in

^{*} See his Homily on the end of the world.

particular, his horrid profanations and contempt of God, his power by the agency of his evil Spirits to cause all kinds of disorders in the elements, his subversion of all morality, and his tyranny over all that fear and obey God; for among his other cruelties he shall cause a great famine, and engross all provisions to himself, and only deal them out to those that will receive his curfed mark and worship him, that so he may damn their fouls. And here we may observe, that it is no other than the spirit of Anti-christ, the God of this world, that rules in the hearts of the tyrants and covetous great ones of the earth, whilft they grasp at all, that they may oppress their poor and needy neighbours, and extort from them an idolatrous kind of homage and worship for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread *. In a word, the confusion and anguish, the lamentation and mourning, from all kinds of mifery, that shall then prevail in the earth, as set forth by the above Fathers, and also several others of them +, is enough to make one wish to die, rather than live to see that time; or should it be our lot to come under so severe a trial, may the good Lord keep us stedfast in the faith, and give us the Spirit of martyrdom that we fall not into the fnare of the Devil! But neither let us deceive ourselves, for the spirit of Anti-christ is now in the world, and was in the world in the days of the apostle ‡,

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^{*} Ezek. xiii. 19. + See Cyril in Gen. lib. 11. and Gregory Moral. lib. 14, and 32. ‡ 1 John iv. 3.

and great abominations he doth in it through his willing instruments and members; nay, his prefent invisible kingdom, as it now stands in the mystery of iniquity, may be more dangerous and full of delufion than his future perfonal reign, as the Devil is less likely to deceive when his cloven foot appears, than when he tempts and beguiles under the more specious appearances of decency and the form of godliness: However, when he comes to reign with fulness of power in his visible kingdom, the dreadful effects of his malice will be the most severely felt. To the woes of this his personal reign the xxivth chap. of St. Matthew, and the xiiith of St. Mark, feem principally to refer, speaking of the tribulation that will then be fuch, as was not from the beginning of the world: The former chapter does likewise refer to Daniel for the prophecy of these times, and in particular for the abomination of desolation mentioned in Dan. chap. xi, and xii. wherein the reign of this wicked monster is foretold: And as this reference was made by our Lord long after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, it demonstrates that the fulfilling of the prophecy was to take place under the Christian church: Nor can it with any propriety be construed as fulfilled at the pollution of the temple, when Jerusalem was sacked by Titus in any other than a typical sense, as after the dispensation of the gospel took place under the pentecostal revelation of it, the temple at Jerusalem was no longer to be confidered as the Holy Place, for all relative holiness belonging to it then ceased. How

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How hard do some expositors strain every nerve of criticism to set us free from all fear of the divine threatenings and judgments as belonging to ourselves? Is not this prophecying of smooth things to prophecy deceit? Let it be farther observed here, that the abominable character given us in Daniel chap. vii. 25. and which can be no other than Anti-christ, is mentioned by St. Paul * by the name of the Man of Sin that shall be revealed before the second coming of Christ. So that this doctrine of Anti-christ's personal reign is not only supported by the judgment of the Fathers, but feems countenanced by the authority of the Scriptures: And it also challenges our affent if viewed by the rule of analogy, and as an inference drawn from parity of reason; that as the great mystery of godliness had its manifestation in Christ, so the mystery of iniquity should likewise be manifested in a visible Anti-christ. As these two great principles of good and evil have both alike man for the subject of their operations, and both a kingdom in this world; and as man in his present situation betwixt the two kingdoms of light and darkness is represented in Scripture as the dwelling of the divine or of the diabolical spirit, so such a principal manifestation of the latter in the human nature, as may in a more emphatical sense be stiled The Antichrist, carries with it much of a reasonable supposition; nor do I see how any one who, with so many Protestant divines, holds the Pope of Rome to be Anti-christ, can call in question the

2 Theff. ii. 3.

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still fuller Revelation of him in a worse character.

What has here been faid on the personal reign of Anti-christ, as it is offered with reafonable proof, so also is it with much moderation of fentiment, and not obtruded on any for belief; for Christian unity implies not sameness of opinion in all things, but unity of faith in effential points, and charity in all: However, the subject is interesting, and capable of being purfued through many important confiderations, one only of which arrests me here, before I pass on to other matters, I mean those execrable focieties hinted at before, grown fo common in this kingdom, confisting of men hardened in unbelief through the deceitfulness of fin, who join together in determined opposition to the faith of Christ, and to the making converts to infidelity; thus doing all in their power to bring back the charge of Anti-christianism from Rome, to fix it on ourselves with aggravated shame, as it is a greater disgrace to oppose the truth of Christ than to hold it in error and superstition. These are professedly Antichrists according to St. 'John's definition *, who tells the Christians in his days, that as they had heard that Anti-christ should come in the last time, i. e. one in that character eminently so stiled, so were there then many Anti-christs |, or men led by his spirit to oppose the gospel, and subvert the faith of others: And he must

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^{* 1} John iv. 3.

^{| 1} John ii. 18.

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needs be a stranger in our Ifrael, who knows not what a fwift progress infidelity has made of late years amongst us, or is to be told how revealed truths are almost every where spoken against, and is so kept from acknowledging that there are many Anti-christs in these days, many indeed who both for their number and figure afford a melancholy fign of the times, and of the approach of that great Anti-christ that should come, whose fore-runners they are. Nor let the decent but luke-warm professor, who like Gallio careth for none of these things, think too well of himself, because he comes not under this predicament of opposers; for they that can fee and hear their Saviour dishonoured and denied, without any emotions of a godly zeal for his truth and character; they that can feek alliances with the wicked great ones of the earth for the fake of advantage; and they that can read such books as Sans Souci without horror and detestation, are but one degree removed from the spirit of Anti-christ.

The decay of Christian saith is mentioned in Scripture among the signs of the last times, for it is said; When the Son of man cometh, shall be find faith in the earth? A true saith in his person and offices among sew in comparison, and saith in the kingdom he comes to establish, among still sewer: And here, setting aside the many who pretend not to saith, what shall we say of the greater part of those who lay a sort of claim to it? Why, that their saith is good for little or nothing. What is the faith

of them that live in pleasure? All such being pronounced dead to God *, it can be no other than a dead faith. What is the faith of them who only or chiefly purfue the means of getting wealth? Why, as the principle that governs them is stiled Idolatry in Scripture +, it must be an idolatrous faith. What is the faith that bringeth not forth the fruits of good living? It is just as good as the barren-tree that is fit only for the fire. What is the faith of them that live to the world, the ways and fashions of it, in any sense of the expression? Why, not that faith that overcometh the world t, for all fuch are overcome by it, and therefore theirs cannot be a gospel-faith. What is philosophical faith? To doubt, dispute or deny every thing that is not level to the comprehension of our reason. And what is political faith, but an engine of State-craft, using religion for a pretence to carry on the schemes of ambition, greediness and revenge throughout the world, at the expence of the welfare and blood of the deluded multitude, and of every virtue under heaven: It is the whetstone on which men of false honour or brutal rage sharpen their swords, that they may cut the deeper into the hearts of their brethren; and when any fuch take the name of God and religion in their mouths, they are guilty of profanation. These have nothing to do with the distinctions between Lutheran and Calvinift, Protestant and Papist, whilst they themselves

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^{* 1} Tim. v. 6. † Col. iii. 5. ‡ 1 John v. 4.

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have less of true religion than the peaceful Hottentot. If we pais on to the ferious, fuch as are in earnest, and mean something by faith, how much even of this will be found short of the gospel-standard? How great a part of it is a faith of particularism, confisting in opinions or nice distinctions concerning modes and circumstances of government, discipline or unessential doctrines; or else in a self-appropriated confidence, with many words of Scripture fitted to their own fense and system, a system, like the Cone, narrowing from its base to a point and terminating in Self? In these particular systems the generality stand fiercely contending for the faith of their party, shutting up themselves and shutting others out, that no stream of affection from the bowels of charity may flow towards millions, for whom the Lamb of God thed his blood in the boundless latitude of his mercy and love: Hence it is that many a ferious feeking Deift is prejudiced against the truth of the gospel, whilst he finds more of extensive philanthropy and benevolence in the principle of a generous humanity, than in the professed Christianity of such sour bigots to a thrait-laced system. How much then of that which passes in the world for faith, if weighed in the balance of the fanctuary, will be found wanting, and how little left upon the comparison, for a fearful sign of the times? Now let it be observed here, that true faith is no such starveling shriveled thing as many represent it, but is comely with a smooth brow and serene aspect, bearing even outwardly the signature 9

ture of its heavenly extraction; for it is a principle of divine operation, even the life of God in the foul of man; it is the pure element of his grace, in which Christ spiritual opens his kingdom within us; and as this advances, divine charity or love fprings up and flourishes in the foul, enlarging the heart towards God and man, and bringing forth in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Here all things go on well, for in this kingdom we are at peace with God, ourselves and others, neither is there any biting or devouring among brethren: It admits indeed of distinction as to external communion among Christians, nor excludes diverfity of fentiments as to many particulars in the same common general faith, but then it is a principle of moderation in them all, not building up walls of partition as betwixt house and house, but is as one beautiful and spacious edifice consisting of many apartments, having a free communication one with another, where difference only ferves to embellish the whole with a graceful variety: Here Ephraim doth not envy Judah, nor doth Judah vex Ephraim, but all is love, joy and peace. Such are the bleffed effects of a true faith: Evermore, Lord, give us this faith!

But if the decay of faith is given by our Lord as a fign of the last times, so also is that of love: The love of many shall wax cold *: And this prediction applied to our days affords a me-

^{*} Matth. xxiv. 12.

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lancholy fubject for reflexion, whether we confider love here as a human virtue or a Christian grace: If we take it in the former fense; the little of true philanthropy in general, appearing in the want of kindness and hospitality to strangers; and of philadelphianism in a more particular fense, through the decay of difinterested affection among such as stand in the mutual relation of neighbourhood and fociety, together with the great decrease of family-comfort and love. These supply full proof to the point before us; nor is the charge mine, but the complaint of all whose hearts are formed for the bleffing of love, and as fuch the only true judges in this matter; whereas they that can live in discord, as the proper element of their nature, like the Salamander in the fire, are not only content to take the world as they find it, but love to have it so, for they can see nothing defirable beyond the prefent state of it: But, O my foul, come not thou into their fecret, unto their affembly mine bonour be not thou united +. Where the bond of sweet peace and fellowship first knit by mutual affection, becomes untwifted, the generous principle of brotherly love foon changes its nature, and contracts into a spirit of selfishness, as the diffusive rays of the Sun when confined by a burning-glass, converge to a focus: Hence an infatiable thirst to procure and accumulate wealth, and to draw all to felf, shutting up every fource of benevolence towards others:

† Gen. xlix. 6.

And not only fo, but the heart of man in this degenerate state becomes a fit foil for the enemy's husbandry, wherein he fows his cursed feeds of jealoufy, envy, hatred and strife, banishing all innocent chearfulness and confidence among men, and fo turning the great bleffing of conversation, according to the true nature of it, into a fnare and a danger, whereby many are driven to chuse the solitary life rather than expose themselves to the intolerable evils of fociety. These things are mentioned by the prophets among the evils of the latter days, in many places; and who feeth not the accomplishment of them in ours? But if such be the waxing cold of love confidered as a human virtue, what cause have we not to complain of the same, if considered as a Christian grace? It was the advice of Joseph to his brethren, See that ye fall not out by the way; and the command of Jesus to his followers, Have peace one with another; but where are they that follow the advice of Joseph? How few that practise this command of Jesus? What judging and censuring, what reviling and fierce disputings have we here among angry Christians! whilst Ephraim thus envies Judah, and Judab so vexes Ephraim. Why furely, my brethren, you know not what you are about, nor what spirit you are of; for if our common danger from evil men and evil spirits, nor our common warfare in an enemy's country, nor our common hopes of a bleffed inheritance in the heavenly Canaan, nor our common redemption in Christ Fesus: If none nor all

all of these can unite us in brotherly love, we mistake our name and nature, and with all our boast of profession and zeal, are not of his peaceful flock, but wolves in sheep's clothing. When Moses saw two Hebrews striving together, he faid unto him that did the wrong; Why fmitest thou thy fellow? And does not the fame question come home to you with a much stronger emphasis, O ye contentious Christians? It does (if you have not lost the feeling heart and hearing ear) crying out and faying, O man! what art thou doing, and whom dost thou vex and strive against? Is he not thy brother for whom Christ died? Are you not members in one body under him your Head? And is it not as unnatural for thee to hate and injure thy fellow-member as for the hand to smite the face? Take heed what thou doest! Brethren! I speak to all of every denomination, know you not your high calling? You are called to love, to be kindly affectioned, to be tender hearted, to bear with and help one another, and to the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: How comes it then that you thus break the peace, and nourish hatred in your hearts? Is Christ all love, and you all wrath? How then can he be your Lord, or you his disciples? You profess to set your faces for Sion, and to be travellers towards the heavenly country; but confider, my brethren, that is the land of peace and love; and there is the city of the great King which is at unity in itfelf; there is the fweet communion of Saints, that jubilant fellowship of the redeemed ones, U 2

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and nothing but the voice of joy and fongs of praife, from unifon-hearts tuned to love, are to be heard in their dwellings; what then will you do there? Beware, O man, whoever thou art, how thou feekest an entrance into the new ferufalem without the feal of God in thy forehead; for many will boldly advance, even up to the gates thereof, with the language of Sion in their mouths, and with much knowledge of doctrines in their heads, and with broad phylacteries on their garments inscribed with many things faid and done for Chrift, to whom it shall be told from the battlements of the city --- yet lackest thou one thing; and if that thing lacking be love, all the rest will prove but lost labour, there will be no admittance for them there. Let this be faid to thee, thou titular Christendom in general, who playest the hypocrite with the name of Christ in thy mouth, whilst void of his spirit, nay, having strife and envy and war in thy heart; pretending a zeal for the purity of Christian faith at the time that pride, wrath and covetousness are the idols thou worshippest. How wilt thou appear when called upon to give an account of the violence, oppression and persecution that shall be found within thy borders, and of all the defolations which thou haft brought upon the earth, thro' thy wounding of Christian peace and love among brethren, and thereby caufing the holy name whereby thou art called, to be blafphemed among the Gentiles? Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, lest thy candlestick be removed out of bis

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bis place *. Tho' this be spoken, as I trust, from fomething of pure zeal for the Lord and his truth, yet is it also spoken in acknowledgment of my unfuitableness to this office, and with fincere confession of my being the most unworthy among those that worship the Father in spirit and in truth; but these things must be faid by fomebody, and how does my heart wish from founding bowels of tender compasfion and mournful affection, to give a longer and a louder call to all the divided churches in the Christian world, in this time of danger and impending woe, that laying afide their animofities and debates, and being rooted and ground ed in love, and in fellowship with all Saints every where, they may be able to comprehend the breadth and length, the depth and height of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that so when the Lord Jesus shall come from heaven to bless us, each one may present her multitudes of fons and daughters faultless before the prefence of his glery with exceeding joy.

It is a sad subject we are upon, but we must go on with it; as it is better to know the danger which threatens us, that we may avoid it, than to fall into it through a salse security. Among the many dreatful signs of the last times laid down by our Eaviour in the gospels, and particularly in Matth. xxiv. he not only foretells the enmity that shall be in men against revealed religion, and such as preach the truth as

* Rev. ii.

it is in Christ Jesus without respect of persons, but also their great degeneracy in departing from the obligations of morality and natural religion, as their treachery one to another, and the abounding of iniquity in the earth, which if confidered jointly with what St. Paul * foretells of the same perillous times, they will together exhibit a frightful but true description of the present state of the world. And here the general failure of strict truth and justice in dealings, is an article of fad reproach upon the Christian world at this time not to be denied, whether we consider the frauds commonly used in weights and measures, and the price or quality of what is fold; and if here be taken in the unreasonable expectations of the buyer, and his defire to purchase under the true value, we may of a truth affirm, that buying and felling is at this time feldom carried on without fin. The unlawful combinations and monopolies among traders to raife an exorbitant profit from their wares, is another great evil amongst us, common and unredressed by those whose office it is to apply the remedy; and to this must be added that most iniquitous practice of adulterating commodities, even of necessary use; it being well known, that the bread, the beer, the wine, and the medicinal drugs which we buy at a high price, are generally debased with impure, if not unwholefome mixtures: Thus are the principles of life and health corrupted; and whether this may 1

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not properly be termed an indirect way of poifoning, so far as health is hereby impaired, or the restoration of it hindred, cannot, I think, be doubted. It does not occur to me that this last kind of treacherous dealing is mentioned in Scripture; if fo, we may suppose that it was not, or but feldom practifed in those days, but is the growth of later improvements in wickedness. To these corrupt practices in matters of commutative justice may be added those that attend the administrations of publick justice in law-proceedings; as the exorbitance of fees, the multifarious arts used to perplex and protract the iffues of judgment, caufing intolerable expences and vexations to the heart-broken client; the indecent raillery and banter of bold men to baffle evidence and put modesty out of countenance; the fophistry, quirk and false colouring fuffered in pleadings, to the difgrace of serious truth and the offence of heathens, together with all the hired, practifed pains to defend an unjust cause, and so putting darkness for light, and misleading the minds of those that are to decide in judgment. But who can recount all the tricks and traps of fo many among the inferior practitioners in the law, by which many a poor man is ruined every day? This is not faid to reflect difgrace on a profeffion honourable in itself, but to give it a share in that leprofy of corruption which has overspread the whole earth. Thus is fulfilled amongst us what the Prophet foretold +: The

† Isaiah iii. 5.

people shall be oppressed every one by another, and every one by his neighbour. And the degeneracy of the Jews a little before the time of their captivity (for that people was a type of the Christian church in all things) may be considered as a sign of the sad depravation of morals among Christians before the time of the last judgments. Now as touching the former, the same prophet complains as follows *: Our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: Judgment is turned away backward; justice standeth afar off; truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

The figns of the last times may be considered, either as the great abounding evils that follow by natural confequence from the impiety of these times, or as judicial inflictions by way of punishment, happening out of the ordinary course of nature, and so more properly stiled judgments. To begin with the former. A departure from the fear of God in general will confequently relax the fense of every obligation to the relative duties, and of course there will in proportion be less reverence for, and less of dutiful behaviour to superiors amongst inferiors: This is remarkably exemplified in these days, as I believe the fifth commandment was never less in force and operation than now; and so the bold and irreverent behaviour of children to their parents becomes their scourge for not bringing them up in the CO

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nurture and admonition of the Lord: And as to the misbehaviour of servants, it is generally complained of, especially among the genteel and polite; but the blame lies at their own doors; for, living as they most of them do, fo much without God in the world, their fervants are under no good influence or restraint from their examples, and fo rebel against them as they rebel against God. These evils in particular are noticed by the prophet * among the curses occasioned by fin: The child shall behave bimself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the bonourable. From the same decay of the fear of the Lord comes the loss of due regard to the obligations of an oath, whereby the strongest fence to property is broken down, and all remedy from the civil magistrate cut off, to the unspeakable detriment of society: The lofs occasioned by customary, false swearing in the publick revenues is confessed to be very great at this time; and the deficiencies caused by such loss must be made up by additional taxes on the subject, and so the innocent suffer through the guilty. To proceed: Avarice, that it may increase wealth, begets oppression; and luxury, in order to support the pride of life, begets avarice of another kind, whilst both concur in producing the same effect, viz. the rack-renting of tenants; and where this is attended with a fondness for pastimes and vain amusements, an over-proportion of the gentry will refort to the larger towns.

in order to purfue their schemes of pleasure and dissipation, by which means the country will not only lose the benefit of good example and good government from persons of higher class, but be deprived of its due share of wealth *. Thus all things will go wrong a-

* It is to be remarked here with regard to our own nation in particular; that a departure from rural simplicity to an affectation of gentility and politeness in the inferior classes, has almost ruined the country people both in their morals and circumstances, and within this last century well nigh extinguished an useful order of men amongst us, viz. the yeomanry or gentlemen-farmers, who formed a kind of middle class between the true gentry and the lowerrenting farmers, and who by their plain but plentiful way of living were a main support of the poor labourers and their families, and also of benevolence and good neighbourhood in the country; but fuffering themselves to be drawn into a false and fashionable taste (which they were no ways fit for) by their superiors, their lands are now passed into the hands of the over-grown rich, and their descendents now hold upon high rents and hard fare what their forefathers enjoyed as their own property. The great difference for the worse occasioned by this change in the manners of the country people, the increase of parishpoor, the loss of chearful fimplicity, and as to most of the innocent comforts of a rural life, is not to be expressed. This observation might be carried farther, and point out how the fame fashionable folly in a higher degree taking possession of the ancient gentry of this kingdom, has exterminated fo great a part of them from their old family-feats and demesnes, which have been bought up and are now buying up by the wealthy merchants; so that our land is flocking apace with a new race of gentry and nobility, who, without the hospitality and generosity of their predeceffors, fluice off the wealth of the country to hoard it up in the stocks, or to squander it away prodigally in London or Paris. It may be faid without the gift of prophecy; that it will not require many more wars and heavy taxes to finish the ruin of this country.

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pace both in town and country, whence will arise poverty and general discontent in the latter, carelesness in their conduct through desperate circumstances, combinations to cheat the king, their landlords and their minister, dissolute morals, and ruin in the end.

The destructive evils arising to society from the vicious paffions of men unrestrained by the fear of God, will appear still more conspicuous and fatal, if we make the application to perfons of great power and authority in the world; and here the confequences, according to their extent and degree, may arise to a very formidable fign of the times. Thus ambition and thirst of dominion in Christian princes will produce mutual jealousies, deceitful negotiations, tricking in politicks, decay of national faith, and bloody wars oftentimes about matters of little confequence, especially where the civil powers are in too close connexion with mercantile bodies of men, and fo drawn in to fupport their particular quarrels and interests at the expence of the treasure and blood of their subjects: In this case, false maxims concerning publick welfare will be adopted; clashing interests and competitions between the merchants of this and that nation will be found cause fufficient to fend forth fleets and armies to fight all the world over; and the unthinking multitude deluded and bewitched by the found of the word Trade, will madly cry out for war, though thereby they heap taxes, poverty and ruin upon their own heads. From these fermenting

menting passions of mankind in the case before us, unspeakable evils slow in upon society, to the banishment of sweet peace, social love, and every virtue and grace that may endear us to God and one another, in the room of which spring up hatred, rapine, murder, confusion and every evil work, transforming men into savages, and the world into a kind of temporal hell: Good God, what ravaging, what plundering, what scalping is here!

It is to be observed under this head, that war confidered fingly in itself is not offered here as a fign of the last times, but only as it is circumstanced and joined with other figns, or as it becomes more general throughout the world, and more destructive in its effects than any foregoing war: Now that which is foretold in the Prophets and the Gospels among the other last plagues, appears plainly to mean an universal war: Thus in particular feremiab chap. xxv. speaking of the judgment of the fword that God would fend on particular nations, he proceeds to extend his prophecy to the whole earth-" I will call for a fword upon " the inhabitants of the whole earth, faith the " Lord—The Lord hath a controverfy with "the nations—he will plead with all flesh, " and give the wicked to the fword:" And Isaiab chap. xxiv. compares the few that shall be spared from the great desolation, to the few olives that are left after the shaking of an olivetree, or to the gleanings of grapes when the vintage is ended: And the same comparison is used e

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used 2 Esdras xvi. in which chapter we have a fearful account of the defolation that shall be caused by the sword and the other plagues in the last days: And therefore where our Lord freaks of nation rifing against nation, and kingdom against kingdom *, among the other figns of his approaching advent, we are to understand nothing lefs than war throughout the world, for all the figns of the Messiah's kingdom must bear a proportion fuitable to the grandeur of the event, and therefore it may be mentioned as matter of aftonishment, that so many expofitors, even of note, should confine our Saviour's predictions, as recorded in Matthew xxiv. and elsewhere touching the judgments of the last time to the destruction of Jerufalem, seeing they were given to the disciples upon their request to our Lord, that he would tell them what should be the figns of his coming and of the end of the world. What is spoken there of Jerusalem and Judea, are very capable of a mystical sense; and though the destruction of that city for the fins of the Jews be allowed to have its reference in the line of the prophecy. and granting its due share by the way in the judgment-work foretold, yet this hinders not those predictions from referring principally and ultimately to those last judgments that should usher in the peaceful reign of the triumphant Messiab with his faints on earth, and from representing to us in the sufferings of apostate ferusalem the punishments to be inflicted in

* Matth. xxiv.

the latter days on apostate Christendom; especially when we confider, that the whole œconomy of the Jews, their temple, city, various revolutions, defolations, rejection and restoration, are fo many typical exhibitions of the Christian church in its several periods and states: These things are spoken of in their history for our instruction and admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. best reason that can be given for interpreting these prophesies as fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem is taken from ver. 34. This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled: But this arises from a mistaken sense of the word yevea, which, as Mr. Mede * judiciously observes, fignifies not only ætas or fæculum, but also gens or progenies, not only the age of a man or a century, but also a people or progeny; and accordingly interpreting this passage as spoken of the Jewish nation, he expounds it thus: " The nation of the Jews " shall not perish till all these things be ful-" filled;" or, in other words, that they should not cease to be a people, however dispersed throughout the world, till these things should have their full accomplishment. How does this restored plain sense of one Greek word set all right in this place, whilst at the same time it gives light to another prophecy relating to the preservation of that people in their distinction from all others till the fecond coming of the Son of Man, the completion of which thus

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far we are eye-witnesses to: Besides, there are feveral particulars in this chapter, which cannot in any fense be understood as fulfilled by the calamities brought upon the Jews by the befieging and destruction of their city, more especially that part of the prophecy which tells us, that immediately after the tribulation of those days, all the tribes of the earth shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, ver. 30. Let us therefore wait in patient hope and all readiness of expectation for this fecond advent of our Lord, when he shall come to establish the Jerusulem from above on the ruins of that which is from beneath.

The last plagues are not to take place till the measure of transgression be filled up, and the man of fin attain to his perfect stature; but then according to his growth and the progress of the mystery of iniquity, a proportionable revelation of the righteous judgment of God is to be expected. As the vials and woes mentioned in the Revelations will be the finishing of the plagues, fo it is reasonable to believe that the time appointed for these will be very short, as well by reason of their extreme severity, as because of their abridgement for the elect's fake, who shall be preserved, many of them, as by miracle from the rage of the wicked, who shall be like mad-men, as we are told *, sparing none, but still spoiling and destroying those that fear the Lord: However,

^{* 2} Eldras, chap. xvi.

the plagues precurfory or preparatory to the last, will be of longer duration, and go on increafing till the judgment-work be finished by the triumphs of mercy in the bleffed kingdom. The fore-running chastisements (which are already begun) will, by a merciful restraint on the evil passions of men, have certain pauses or hort ceffations in them, granted for ferious confideration and repentance to the inhabitants of the earth; and as fome (we hope many) will answer this gracious design of God's providence, fo the generality, we are told *, will go on to harden themselves more in their impenitence and wickedness. The late war, if viewed in the full latitude of its horrors and dreadful consequences (little apprehended of many) or in the greatness of its extent beyond what was ever known before in the world, is to be reckoned as one of the plagues fore-running and preparatory to the last; nor are we to consider the present cessation of it in the light of a lafting peace, but only as a paufe or breathing time till it break out again with augmented rage and horrors. In its precurfory view it is to be confidered as a trumpet founding the alarm to the fucceeding woes; in its renewed progress, as running into one of the last plagues; and therefore the true waiters for the kingdom will not flatter themselves with false hopes of any long continued peace, but keep themselves in readiness for the increasing evils to come upon the earth. Among the

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^{*} Eccles. viii. 11.

figns of the general desolating war to ensue, there are many that offer themselves to the attentive observer, as the little good effects that appear from the past calamities of war on the minds of men in the way of repentance and reformation of life, or rather still greater depravation of morals and worldly mindedness; the not giving to God the glory of our deliverances and fuccess, but ascribing it to human prowefs and counfels, nay, discontent under peace restored through thirst of more trade and more territory, both of which inordinately purfued tend to corrupt and ruin any people, tho', through the infatuation of avarice and ambition, men see it not: And lastly, the spirit of discord prevailing in the minds of men, shewing itself in party-distinctions and animosities in the state, breach of the relative duties betwixt superiors and inferiors, dissensions in neighbourhoods, family-quarrels, and domestic strife abounding every where; all this is war in its principle and curse, tho' men fight not with fwords and guns, and are the prognoftics of more open violence and hostilities, shewing, that fewel is already prepared for that devouring fire that maketh defolate, and that the feeds are even now fowed for that harvest, which is appointed for the fickle of the destroying Angel. False reasonings and a deep lleep with regard to the threatened judgments of God and the figns of their approach, indispose the greater part from believing these things, though I must own that my heart is ready to quake within me at the apprehensions of

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of them, and but for trusting in confidence. that the end of God's arifing to judgment will be to fave the meek of the earth *, and for the manifestation of his great mercy towards all that shall be qualified objects of it, I had rather bear the reproach of a false prophet all my days than behold the calamities that are coming upon the earth, as fore-shewn by the figns of the times; but this promise have we, that Zion shall be redeemed with judgment +; and so the greatest severities that shall befal her redeemed fons and daughters, will be no other than the chastisement of her peace in the end. Under this article of war may justly be censured the cruelties adopted in the manner of conducting it, equalling if not exceeding the customs of many Pagan nations, as impoverishing the innocent under the mockname of contributions, exterminating quiet people, men, women and children, from their possessions and country under pretence of disaffection, and that of following the example of barbarous favages in scalping: These things, in the true representation of them, are concealed from the greater part, or fo palliated with political reasons as to make them pass; but are detested of those who have not lost all tincture of humanity; and they that go about to justify such practices, will justify the burning of Negroes alive or the leaving them to starve on gibbets, as is sometimes practifed in our foreign plantations: Such persons may

^{*} Pfal. lxxvi. 9.

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justify inquisition-cruelties for me; nay, as I cannot consider them in the character of men, were they to go about to justify the Devil, I should not think them worthy of an answer. This puts me in mind of what is told us of the Indians of Calicut in the East-Indies, who worship a frightful image of the Devil to which they facrifice children, and give as a reason for this hellish worship: "That God did indeed " at first create the world, but that men so " far corrupted themselves, that he turned " the government of it over to the Devil." Wherefore do men who facrifice to the Devil, according to his will, deny their master, and refuse to be called Diabolians? O merciful Jefus, hasten the time of thy wished-for kingdom, when all thy worshippers shall love as brethren, neither shall cruelty nor war be any more known.

Though war be an evil apparently proceeding from the will of man, and under the direction of human means, yet it is also to be confidered as a judicial infliction in a proper fense of the word, wherein man is made the instrument of his own punishment: Thus, for the fins of a people, a spirit of error and deceit may be suffered to infatuate their governors and mislead them into the way of destruction, as was the case of Abab seduced by the lying Prophets: And thus wicked men by the confent of their minds to what is evil, become the willing tools of the Devil, and he is permitted to rule over them as the master they

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have chosen: His servants we are to whom we obey . However, the minds of the greater part are most affected by those judgments or figns which are dispensed through extraordinary operations in the natural world, in the way of dreadful appearances or destructive consequences; and therefore the great governor of the world is pleased on extraordinary occasions to manifest himself to the children of men by fuch visible tokens for warning or punishment: Accordingly, all great changes in the world have been ushered in by some portentous phænomena; much more may it be expected, that fuch grand and interesting events as the coming of Christ and the renovation of the world should have their prognostics and fuitable apparatus, as foretold in the Prophets and in the Gospels; nor are these times without their alarming figns in the heavens, in the earth, and in the waters, answering thereto; witness earthquakes in divers places within these few years, repeated and multiplied beyond what was ever known fince the creation of the world, whereby many populous cities + with great numbers of their inhabitants were destroyed; as likewise warning earthquakes in this land and very many parts of the Continent, insomuch that accounts of earthquakes are now become fo common as to be read in the publick papers without any degree of furprize; fo the warnings of God lofe

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^{*} Rom. vi. 16. + Lima in South America; Lisbon, Tripoli in Syria, Mequinez, &c.

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their force on a hardened people through the multitude of his monitory mercies. Commotions in the waters with fudden fwells and falls, not only in the fea, but even in lakes and ponds, contrary to the known laws of nature, make another fign of the times; to which also belong dreadful inundations in many parts of the world, one of which in China we lately heard of, whereby more than a million of lives was loft; and yet this alarming article in our publick papers was less attended to than would have been the loss of a ship's cargo of tea. Could then the prophet mean ourselves when he faid *? " When thy judgments are in the " earth, the inhabitants of the world will " learn righteousness;" or rather not his following words belong to us +: "Lord, when "thy hand is lifted up, they will not fee." What dreadful accounts of hurricanes and tempefts have we had of late from abroad? And one at home in August last causing darkness at noon-day as in the night: What balls and bodies of fire have been feen flying through the atmosphere, with other meteors of different appearances, giving light in the night as at noon-day? What eruptions from burning mountains, what floods of liquid fire iffuing from the bowels of the earth have we lately read of? In particular by a letter from Engelbum in Sweden of a thick and bright shower of fire that fell there in August last. May not

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^{*} Isaiah xxvi. 9. + Ver. 11.

‡ See Lloyd's Evening Post, No. 970.

these be considered as so many pre-eruptions or fore-flashes from the universal magazine of fire thut up in the belly of nature, now labouring for enlargement, and ready to burst into an external birth, when the Lord of the whole earth shall give the word of command to this active minister, to execute the will of the great Some of these things indeed have happened before separately, but never with fuch concurrence of prodigies and other figns as in our days. O England, England! how do thy unbelieving fons call out for figns on those that speak to them in the name of the Lord, and yet cannot discern the signs of the times displayed in all the elements throughout the earth, nor the day of their visitation! But if these things cannot be considered as monitory presages of the Son of man's coming to reign on earth, let them be dreaded as flaming omens of the approaching final judgment, that fo this way they may lead to feriousness and repentance. But here, alas! we are furnished with another fad fign foretold by an apostle in the following words: " There shall come in " the last days scoffers, walking after their " own lufts, and faying, Where is the promife " of his coming *?" &c. If this prophecy did not particularly point to the infidelity of these days, it does however find its accomplishment in them, whilst almost all put by the confideration of these things, saying, " All things are as they were from the beginning

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" of the creation;" whereas they have not always continued the fame, as the apostle tells them; for the world was once destroyed by water; nor will they always continue the same, for it shall again be destroyed by fire: And if men have continued the same ever since the time of the flood, and no better for all the warnings and judgments of God; nothing mended in their principles and manners, after so many messages and miracles by Moses and the prophets, by Christ and his apostles, they are worse than Sodom and Gomorrab *, and are themselves a sign that the judgment lingereth not, but is hastening to its accomplishment. Now fuch fcoffers strengthen themselves not a little in their incredulity by that irreligious kind of philosophy, which teaches men nowa-days to explain away God's warnings and judgments into unmeaning effects from natural causes, that so, after refusing to believe him in his written word, and denying all communications betwixt his Spirit and their hearts, they may also exclude him from giving them any notices of his will in nature, and fo live as without God in the world; for after all, fuch philosophers, be they Epicurean, Cartefian, or Newtonian, are no better than a more refined species of Atheists, who labour to persuade themselves and others, that all things happen without any providence or interpolition of the Almighty in the government of the world. The Heathens shewed more of reverential be-

* Matth. x. 15.

lief in some over-ruling divine powers; for upon the appearance of any prodigies in nature, they ran to their temples and altars, to worship and propitiate them in their way; but the Christian philosopher by his fancied superior wisdom sees nothing in these things to lead him to God; for he fets himself to account for them some how or other from nature, and so thinks he has nothing to fear: But if nature has all power without wisdom or goodness to direct it, he has most to fear; but if it be endued with wildom and goodness as well as power, then let him at least worship nature for his God, if he will not worship the God of nature: If he will not fay, God help us! then let him fay, O Nature, help us! Unless he chuses rather to say, O Baal, hear us! But let fuch men get rid of their fears as well as they can, they will have more than they care to own; and though through the prefent obduracy of their hearts they should be able to hold out against many plain warnings, and remain impenetrable by the force of leffer judgments; vet when the time shall come for the full accomplishment of the last woes, and the pouring out of the apocalyptic vials, and there shall be figns in the fun and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity +, what heart so bold, as not to quake for fear at beholding these things! And when the powers of heaven shall be shaken, and the Son of man shall appear in visible majesty with power and great glory; ye mockers who now deride the

† Luke xxi. 25.

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promise of his coming, and ye incorrigible finers who defy it, what then will ye do? For how shall his enemies be able to stand before him in the great day of his wrath? O think of this all ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you.

Another fign of the last times is the opposition and enmity that the truth will meet with in those days; when the faithful witnesses for God and his Christ will have a trying time of it, and fuffer many things from the men of that generation. St. Paul gives us a fad account of those perillous times *, and among other marks thereof, fays, that men shall be despisers of those that are good, and therefore no wonder that we hear him fay presently after, that the time will come, when they will not endure found doctrine. And are we not fallen into those times? We are: The contempt of true godliness, and the hatred of the truth that makes manifest and condemns the evil of the times, is a proof of this affertion; and therefore every one that lays open the terrors of the Lord and his righteous judgments on a finful world, as revealed in the Scriptures, must expect that many a one will represent him as a troubler of Israel, and say of him in his heart, if not with his mouth, as Abab faid of Micaiah: I bate bim, for he doth not prophecy good concerning me, but evil +. Reader, bring thy felf to this test, and thou shalt know what

^{* 2} Tim. iii. † I Kings xxii. 8.

manner of spirit thou art of. That the generality will now no longer endure found doctrine is evident, if we consider how many there are that have no true faith in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world, but think and speak of him only as a Law-giver, that came to establish a better rule of morality than had obtained before; and therefore to preach him in his character as the Son of God; in the virtue of his atonement; in the power of his grace; and in the ministrations of his Spirit in our hearts, will be offensive to all such, and they will prefently cry out; Give us morality; not that they have a greater zeal for morality than other men, or abound more in good works, but it goes against the pride of their hearts to believe in a salvation, that is not of debt, but of grace: They chuse rather to claim it as a reward of some fancied merit in themselves, and to flatter their delusive hopes, that they are at any time fufficient of themselves to help themselves. But wherefore this crying up of morality against Christianity, to fet fuch good friends at variance? Is not a right faith in Christ the best foundation for morality, or have they found out the way to lay a fafer and better? How then do we make void the law through faith, when we establish the law on fo fure a foundation; for does not a true faith work by love? And is there any fuch good fecurity for obedience as this, feeing love is the fulfilling of the law in all its parts; and if we love Christ truly, we sha'l certainly keep his commandments faithfully? Which

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gives occasion to that faying: Love, and do what you will. But in truth, these men only use the pretence of morality as a cover to their infidelity. But fecondly; If some are so all for works (meaning their own felf-righteoufness) without a Saviour; so others are all for a Saviour to fave them in, and not from their fins, by an outward imputation, and not the inward renovation of a gospel-spirit, the act of believing supplying with them the place of receiving: They are wholly for faith, but then it is that particular faith of persuasion, that they are the elect; that affurance of faith, that they are justified, even whilst the peaceable loving fruits of the Spirit, denoting them to be the friends of God and man, are yet wanting: They honour Christ in his external offices and in the history, but deny him in the mystery as the true second Adam and our spiritual Father, making us partakers of the divine nature through the quickening power of his Spirit: They reverence indeed the Scriptures, but what other key do they give them than the dim light of erring reason, whilst they deny all divine teachings, even in the most spititual truths, by immediate communications from that word of God which liveth and endureth for ever, as though he who is the light of the world, and the fountain of all truth, had no intercourse with our spirits, or had confined himself to convey heavenly instruction to our minds through the less certain and less fatisfying medium of written characters; whereas the writing of his laws in our hearts, whether through

through or without the external ministry of the letter, by the illumination of his Spirit, is the promifed privilege of the new covenant *. Now how hardly will all fuch endure that found doctrine of Christ in us, the hope of glory +; of the kingdom of God within us ! as revealed in our hearts by his Spirit; of his light shining in our hearts to give us the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ s. But why this fetting up the letter against the spirit, which is the only true life and power of it? Wherefore all this opposition to any part of this great mystery of godliness, seeing Christ is confessedly a mystery, the soul of man is a mystery, and the whole of our falvation from beginning to end is a mystery; and what is there more mysterious in God manifested in our spirit than in our flesh? Nay, is it not even rational to conclude, that where the malady is, there the remedy must be applied; if then the ferpent be in us, the bruiser of the ferpent must slay him there; if darkness, the light within can only dispel it; if fin, there the righteousness of Christ must expel it and have the dominion; and if death be in our fallen nature, the life of God in the foul of man can alone be our helper. Nothing in nature is brought about by imputation (as that word is generally understood) but all things by power; and therefore nature which affords us an image of every other divine truth, affords

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^{*} Jerem. xxxi. 33, 34. † Col. i. 27. ‡ Luke xvii. 21. § 2 Cor. iv. 6.

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us none of this supposed one; but a Scriptureword with a wrong meaning of our own put to it, too often is called and passes for the word of God: Christ is no otherwise imputed to us than as he is made unto us of God wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption *, for he is the great Word of his power working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. O how does a human belief in the natural understanding, drawing all things in favour of a system of man's devising, set up ifelf against the faith that purifieth the heart +, and is of the operation of God !! Lord, give us humble minds and the simplicity of little children, that we may dispute less and love more! But thirdly, How great is the number of decent professors who believe as if they believed not, and scarcely know what they believe, the chief of whose religion is going to church, praying as decently as they drefs, and preferving so much of character as may pass with the world; and indeed where true godliness is out of fashion, character in religion becomes an easy purchase. Now how will these endure found doctrine? How to hear of the divine life in all its parts, of the necessity of the cross, and of entring into the kingdom of heaven thro' the strait gate of strict discipline, mortificathat tion and felf-denial? How will they bear to be gs by told, that the world lyeth in wickedness; that ds us though we are in it, we must not be of it; ffords and that we have never more cause to suspect

^{* 1} Cor. i. 30. + Acts xv. 9. ‡ Col. ii. 12.

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the foundness of our state than when all men fpeak well of us? How many have we every where of fuch smooth profesfors who will not endure found doctrine, lest they should be difturbed in their false peace, and so be converted and healed; but chuse rather to take their chance, as they call it, and fo fail carelest down with the tide of fashion they know not whither? The case is more common than is imagined, and I think will appear so on the iffue of the following supposition: And here let us image to ourselves John the Baptist, that faithful witness, who knew no flattery, and fought no favour from men, as fent with a message of repentance and reproof to our great metropolis of London, and to preach at full Change to all there affembled, against covetousness and setting their affections on things on earth; and addressing himself to such as love their money more than God, should call them a generation of vipers, put them in mind of the wrath to come, and pronounce on every tree not bringing forth good fruit, that it should be hewn down and cast into the fire: How many of our Babylonian merchants, who study only how to buy and fell and get gain, would be ready to cast dust into the air, and cry out, Away with fuch a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live! Let us again suppose that he were to escape their hands and to pass on to the Court (and how strange would fuch a character appear there! fee him here declaring freely against all conformity to this world, and feeking the honout nen

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that cometh of man only; reproving the vices of the great with an impartial feverity, telling them how hard it is for them to enter into the kingdom, and pronouncing the judgment of God against all that do such and such things. What think we would be the effect of fuch plain dealing? Why, at least, that it would turn their politeness into rage, and that they would fay of him as was faid of Elisha on his visit to Jehu; Wherefore came this mad fellow here? Lastly, follow him to the Camp, that rendezvous of men of honour who in fatisfaction for an affront demand the blood of the offender, and hear him preaching on those words: Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you. How contrary must every part of his fermon appear to the maxims of military men! And if in decency they should forbear to dispute the authority of his message, yet how many of those well-behaved gentlemen, at least would say with one consent; In these things I pray thee have me excused? May it not then with truth be said: That the time is come, when men will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they beap to themselves teachers, having itching ears *: and where the former part of m the the prophecy is fulfilled, it will not be long e! Let before they find teachers ready to scratch those e their itching ears and to fuit their doctrine to their d how tafte: If they are willing to pay well for prothere!

^{* 2} Tim. iv. 3.

phecying smooth things, they will meet with fmooth men enow, to reprefent the way as broad and the gate as wide as they would have Where the fault first began in that apostate state of the church complained of by the Prophet *, is not faid, as whether the Prophets first tickled the ears of the people for the fake of advantage, or the people bribed the Prophets to that office; but this he fays of them; "A wonderful and horrible thing is commit-" ted in the land: The Prophets prophecy " falfely, and the priefts bear rule by their " means, and the people love to have it fo." But there is another dreadful subject of prophecy still behind, as delivered by St. Peter +, viz. that false teachers should arise, who should privily bring in damnable berefies, even denying the Lord that bought them. Now fuch are all they, who deny the corruption of man's nature and his derivation of original fin from our first Parents through their horrible fall; and affert, on the contrary, his natural fufficiency to please God and keep his commandments without any inward supernatural grace or the operations of his divine Spirit. As this is denying man's alienation from God by nature, and his woeful bondage under fin, so is it a denial of our Saviour in his character of the Lord that bought or redeemed us to God by his blood ‡; it is to rob Jesus Christ of the merit and honour of man's falvation, and to rob man of his most comfortable hope and refuge on this fide heaven;

^{*} Jerem. v. † 2 Epist. ii. ‡ Rev. v. 9.

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for every one that is not under the power and infatuation of fin, must know and feel his mifery by nature, and that he is absolutely infufficient of himself for his own happiness, and to walk before God in righteoufness and holiness of living; and, if he thinks otherwise, he is not only blind, but full of Luciferian pride: This is that leaven of Socinus, which has fubverted the faith of many; and as far as this anti-christian doctrine is defended and preached in any church, so far is that sign of the abomination of defolation fitting in the holy place *, come to pass therein; and should any church become totally infected with the same poison, it would then be in the character of the whore fitting upon the beast, as described in the Revelations. It is faid of the seducers beforementioned, that they shall privily bring in damnable herefies, to diftinguish them from open opposers and professed infidels, nay, to fignify that they shall outwardly profess the truth, nay, bear office in the church, and perhaps be high in ecclefiaftical dignity, and yet no other than wolves in sheeps clothing: They will hang out false lights to deceive the unwary, and pretend to be advocates for the doctrines of grace and the office of the Holy Spirit, while they only use the words, but . mean nothing by them, nay, whilst they use all the deceivableness of false criticism, and mockery of profane jesting, to explain away the true meaning of grace, and to ridicule the

* Matth. xxiv. 15.

operations of the Holv Spirit. But in order to bring all fuch to the greater shame, the Lord will raife up in his church men and women of low degree to detect their fallacy, and withstand them to the face; nor shall these men of Gath, with all their carnal weapons of fophistry and vain words, be able to stand before them, for each one shall be as David, and go forth in the strength of the Lord. Blessed Jesus! the Author, Conductor and Finisher of our Salvation, strengthen the hearts of thy servants in these latter times! when so many depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, (1 Tim. iv. 1.) that they may bear their testimony, with all becoming zeal, to the honour of thy divine Majefty, and also (if called to it) patiently suffer for thy truth fake.

As the last times will have their figns in the general apostacy and opposition to the truth that shall be in those days, as also in the severe judgments of God throughout the world: So likewife may we look for comfortable figns of the approaching bleffed kingdom in extraordinary dispensations of grace among the appointed heirs of it; and that as the man of fin is to have his full revelation in the subjects of his government, fo the man Christ fesus in the power of his Divinity, will reveal himself in the hearts of many fons and daughters through uncommon measures of his fanctifying and enlightning Spirit, far beyond what was ever known upon earth. Thus at the very time when

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when wickedness in general shall abound in the earth, grace and truth shall abound also, not fo much in any particular church, as in particulars of all churches. Daniel prophecying of the last times says, " Many shall run to and " fro, and knowledge shall be increased *:" And yet Amos speaking of the same times, foretels a famine of the word +, and that men shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. Now both these predictions, notwithstanding their seeming contrariety, may meet in the fame days, for they respect different runners and different seekers and different preachers. Men that run only in their own will and their own way, and not according to the will and way of the Lord, may run long enough before they reach the mark; and they that feek him only for their own ends, and that by fuch fort of feeking they may give a little, false quiet to their consciences, whilft they pursue the things of this world with their whole hearts (which the Prophet calls making God to ferve with our fins †) such feekers will be no true finders, but according to the idols that are in their hearts, will their answer be §. The prophet Daniel in the same chapter hath given us the distinction betwixt the true and false seekers: " None of the " wicked shall understand, but the wife shall " understand." Now who are the wise here meant? Not the wife in their own conceit,

^{*} Dan. xii. 4. † Amos viii. 11. ‡ Ifai. xliii. 24. § Ezek. xiv. 4.

nor the wife to dispute and criticize, but the wife in heart, even the man that feareth the Lord; bim shall be teach in the way that he shall chuse *: Nay, the fear of the Lord is called the beginning of wisdom. All such shall know him from the least unto the greatest +, whilst the wife of this world with all their head-knowledge and learned lumber shall meet with darkness in the day-time, and grope in the noon-day as in the night ‡. Therefore the knowledge that shall be increased, according to the prophet Daniel, means nothing less than a fruitful, influencing knowledge, a knowledge of things pertaining to God and true godliness, even a faving knowledge of the Lord our righteousness, as meant in that exhortation of the apostle, "Grow in grace and in the know-" ledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ | ." Now it must be confessed, that amidst all the darkness of critical, political, polemical, and other unedifying kinds of divinity fo called, which have peftered and tormented the church of Christ for so long a time, to the sport of infidels and the growth of deifm, much light of found doctrine hath rifen up in this darknefs, both at home and abroad, within a century past; and perhaps nothing has more hindered many from feeing and acknowledging this truth, than a blind obedience to custom and prejudice in favour of a certain fet of authors, erected into a standard of orthodoxy by

the bigots of a system. Thus the doctrines of original fin through the corruption of our nature by the fall; the infufficiency of a mere moral righteoufness for our acceptance with God; the necessity of the internal light and influences of the Holy Spirit; the nature of regeneration, &c. have been more infifted on, and evinced from a clearer knowledge of the Scriptures in this and the foregoing age, than has been done fince the early times of Christianity; and tho' on this foundation many have built a superstructure of human inventions no better than wood, hay and stubble, to be consumed by the fire that trieth and purifieth; yet others have held these great truths in righteousness, and a found understanding: So that amidst all the darkness and strife of a contentious theology, and the dead formality of an outward worship, doctrinal knowledge has increased with many throughout the feveral churches as a fign in its gradual progress towards the opening of the kingdom in due time: Light has been in their Goshen, whilst others have wrapt themselves up in the thick cover of their own darkness.

But, as knowledge in religion is only a bleffing according to the right use and improvement of it under a ministration of grace, so, it is only here spoken of, as it has been sollowed by a work of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of many, under different appearances and instruments, according to its time and degree of manisestation, though chiefly to one

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and the same effect, viz. in convincing them of fin and their loft estate by nature, and in making them diffatisfied with that lukewarm, lifeless, unmeaning thing which so much passes for religion in the world, that fo they might enquire more diligently after the things belonging to their peace, and feek the kingdom of God and his righteousness with their whole hearts. A remarkable work of this kind happened in England about the opening of the present century, and may be considered as a fign or preludious exhibition to greater things that should fall out in the succeeding course of Great numbers were deeply impressed with more than ordinary concern about their spiritual welfare; very alarming warnings and calls to repentance were publickly given; many formed themselves into religious societies; and meetings for pious conference and exhortation were held in diverse places, both in London and the country, and reforted to by many of the gentry and nobility; one of which, on account of the feveral persons of fashion of the female fex in particular that attended there, was called in derifion by the mockers of the times, The Taffata Meeting. Many persons at that time, both among the clergy and laity, were led to bear their publick testimony against the lifeless faith and empty forms of professing Christians, and to protest boldly against the heathenish diversions and vain fashions of the age; and some under a persuasion that the end of the world was nigh at hand, earnestly exhorted their brethren to prepare the way of the Lord,

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Lord, and to make ready for his appearing; and though much of defect and delution appeared mixed with the zeal of some, as the fpirit of error is ever ready to counterfeit, that fo he may difgrace the truth; and in a great number of persons of different denominations, this is the more to be expected; yet the folid piety, and affectionate warnings of others concerned as instruments in the work, made lasting impressions on the minds of many, to the bringing forth the fruits of good living, fome of whom are still alive to testify to this truth. For a more particular account of the work here mentioned, I refer the reader to a book called the Great Criss by R. Roach, B. D. who was a diligent observer of the figns of the times in that day.

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Nor are we here to pass over in filence, but rather to give heed with more ferious attention to that awakening, which has appeared of late years amongst us in the minds of many of every class, as to the state of their souls, and the things pertaining to felvation, whereby great numbers throughout the kingdom have been brought to renounce their vain confidence in the form of godliness, and in particular that cursed idol, self-righteousness, and to cast themselves upon the Lamb of God (that taketh away the fin of the world,) for wisdom, righteousness, fanctification and redemption; and fo in the midst of a land befotted, asleep or dead, have tafted the good word of God,

and the powers of the world to come *: Thus Gideon's fleece was watered with the dew of heaven, whilst all around was dry +. Where any remarkable stirrings of grace appear among a people with fuitable effects on the lives of those, who are the subjects of it, and evidencing itself, not by affected peculiarities of opinion, felf-elevation, or party-distinctions; but by humility, the fruits of a found conversion, and an universal charity, we are not to look upon fuch a work as a light thing, but as a matter of serious importance designed for our use and application; nor is it enough to justify our opposition or indifference, that it comes not to pass according to the settled order of human institutions, or because it does not fquare with our maxims of fitness and regularity; for we are not to give laws to God, who is not bound by human prescription, but is pleased at times to vary his proceedings from the ordinary course of things, as well to affert his fovereign authority, as to give distinction to his interpolition; nay, thus much is implied in the very name and nature of an extraordinary work; and therefore to take offence at this, is to deprive ourselves of the benefit intended by it, and may lead to the hardning of our hearts in the day of our visitation: Nor is it less dangerous to make stumbling-blocks for our feet of the infirmities and flips of our brethren, feeing that a work of the Spirit of God

^{*} Heb. vi. 5.

⁺ Judges vi. 38.

is confistent with much weakness in the instrument; and he that will receive no message from the mouth of an imperfect man, must have rejected the testimony even of prophets and apostles, who had their gradual increase and different attainments in grace, as well as the fervants of God in our days. Let us lay afide prejudice and evil fpeaking, and put on charity; let us bear in mind how short we ourselves come of those, we so often slight and vilify; let us walk in fimplicity and lowliness of mind, and feek the Lord with our whole heart, and then we shall be more ready to hear, and also more fit to receive what any one has to offer to us on the part of the Lord, and reverence the messenger, whatever be his denomination or character.

The forementioned part of Daniel's prophecy, that in the last days knowledge shall be increased (that is, in the children of the kingdom) may now be confidered on the way to its accomplishment in a more especial reference to certain, enlightened instructors, whom the Lord hath fitted, and prepared as veffels of honour, by whom to open the treasures of divine knowledge, and to reveal the depth of the mysteries of grace and godliness to their brethren; I mean the spiritual writers, who in these last times have been set as so many bright stars in the firmament, to lead benighted men, who had lost their way, to the city of God; to call them off from their angry disputes and blind

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blind zeal for little things, to the more weighty matters of religion, and into the paths of the divine life. Some fuch living witnesses of the power of Christ manifested in his Saints, have, from time to time in every age of the church, been raised up and preserved, as the spiritual falt and light of it, and may be confidered as answering to the order of Prophets under the Jewish economy, who were appointed to be extraordinary declarers and expounders of the divine law and will, though not of the tribe of Levi; to testify against the corruptions, both of priests and people, when settling on the lees of an outfide tabernacle or temple-fervice, and to hold forth to them the necessity of a more spiritual worship: But in these last days of the foregoing, and prefent centuries, such able ministers of the Spirit, both in the clergy and laity, far exceeding in power of ministration, what had been known in the like way for many preceding ages, have by a special defignation of providence been distributed through the divided churches of Christendom, and sent forth as the trumpets of the heavenly King, to proclaim his royal advent in Spirit and in the power of his Grace, thereby to prepare many fons and daughters for the glories of his triumphant kingdom to be established upon earth.

These highly favoured servants of God, called the spiritual or mystical writers, little read of many, and much disliked of some (for reasons 1

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eaons fons well known to themselves) tho' esteemed precious and honoured by fuch as are in a difposition to profit by them, have appeared in a difference of character, though of the same order, and employed in conducting the same good work: Thus, some have appeared under the harshness and severity of a Mount-Sinai dispensation, or with something of rebated vigour in the character of John the Baptist, whilst others have been called to discharge their office with the mildness of an evangelical Spirit: The former may be confidered as the Lord's messengers in his character of the Lyon of the tribe of Judah; the latter, as bearing the olive-branch of peace before him, coming in his character of meekness as the gentle Lamb of God, thus separately answering the purposes of the apostle's distinction: Of some bave compassion, making a difference: And others fave with fear, (the terrors of the Lord) pulling them out of the fire *. Mrs. Bourignon and Mrs. Guion were two famous instances of this difference of character in the mystic class; but as the impartial severity of the former, in the quality of a reprover, enraged both Papists and Protestants against her, so neither could the patient and meek spirit of the latter defend her from persecution by the zealots of her own church. The history of these two holy women, is a history of the perfecutions they suffered from their youth to their old age, and to they were made partakers of that bleffing

^{*} Jude 22, 23.

which is promifed to all those that are persecuted for righteousness-sake. Let it be remarked here, that as some are called to the office of reproving in every church and every age of it, fo though they may feem at times to bear hard upon failings and characters that may be thought to challenge a milder treatment, yet we should be cautious how we charge them with uncharitableness in their office, so long as they appear to be actuated by a godly zeal, and not by any blameable paffion in their nature: Where truth and the business of reformation are concerned, respect to the credit of any profession or order is a human consideration, that may be carried too far; and though correction may fometimes appear not fo rightly directed, or to fall too heavy, yet perhaps we may all of us, upon an impartial fcrutiny, find matter enough within to justify a severity that appears outwardly unequal or misplaced. These myffical writers of late abounding in the churches, whether confidered as friendly reprovers, instructors or monitors, are here mentioned with other collateral figns of the times, as messengers sent out to make ready a people prepared for the Lord, and to ferve as fo many burning and shining lamps passing through the darkness spread over the earth; to give notice of the Bridegroom's coming; and of these it is, that a judicious author * fpeaks as follows: "Befides the outward and visible churches in

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^{*} See Introduction to The Imperial Standard by R. Roach, B. D.

" their feveral forms and professions, there is " fcattered through the Christian world an in-" visible church in her wilderness-state, there " fed with manna, and poffeffing in privacy " the living powers of God, and worshipping " him as in an inner court in Spirit and in "Truth: Some of them disjoined from the " forms of the day; others appointed with St. " Paul, to take a vow or shave the head " among them, that fo becoming all things to " all men, they may have opportunities of " fowing among them the feeds of spiritual " religion, and of tincturing fuch as are fuf-" ceptible with the power of the kingdom; " yet referving themselves chiefly for the wor-" ship of God in the temple of their hearts: " These, together with all those who are vi-" tally united to Christ in the various forms " and professions of the day, shall, upon the " glorious advent of Christ to his kingdom, " come forth, to the amazement and confu-" fion of the merely external and nominal " Christendom, as a bride adorned for the " nuptials, and terrible to her enemies, as an " army in array under the banner of the tri-" umphant Messiah. Christ the true shepherd " shall feed this his church; his Spirit shall "be her only teacher; and all her children " shall know the Lord from the greatest to the " least. The windows of heaven shall be " opened in bleffings, and the earth shall " pour forth her increase, and submit all her " kingdoms to her true and rightful Sovereign. There shall be a communication " between

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" between the church-triumphant in the hea" vens, and the church-triumphant upon earth,
" in a constant flux and reflux of divine
" powers, sensations and joys. Satan shall be
" chained, and the hostile properties in na" ture, (bound up in harmony) give no more
" annoyance, but all things concur to promote
" the peace and sabbath of the kingdom. God
" shall tabernacle with men, and his joy and
" glory will be the portion of every regenerated
" and virginized soul, as possessing a heaven
" upon earth. Hallelijah! Amen."

Mention of the mystical writers is not here introduced, as if they were all by character professed witnesses to the millennial doctrine; for though feveral, especially among the latter mystics, have declared a strong faith in it, yet many of them have been filent about it, and like others thought differently of it, it being the distinguishing part of their character, to be witnesses to Christ's spiritual kingdom, and to the inward mystery of godliness, holding forth that same Jesus who was crucified at Jerusalem, and known by most imperfectly after the flesh, as the great power of God to be revealed inwardly in our hearts by his Spirit: And in this their office they have been the great preparers of the way for his kingdom of outward glory, the hewers and polishers of many precious stones for the New Jerusalem; for the spiritual children only will be the Firstborn that shall inherit the double portion of heavenly and earthly bleffings. These spiritual builders

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builders therefore, derided under the name of Myflics by the carnal and unwife, are the gracious gift of God to men in these last days, the fathers and mothers (for they are alike of both fexes) of many spiritual sons and daughters, and fo filling up apace that goodly company of Saints, which shall ere long make glad the city of our God with merry hearts, and joyful fongs, and love unspeakable. I should be wanting to the subject I am upon, were I not to speak of these good stewards of the manifold grace of God with the honour that is due to their names; for faithfully have they discharged their ministry in every part of their office, whether we confider them as laying open the deceits of Anti-christ, and expofing to full view the corruptions that have crept into the feveral churches; or as warning men of their great danger by pointing out the false remedies they rest in for their help; calling them out of the darkness and errors of their ways into the light of life, and leading them right by their examples of felf-denial, heavenly mindedness and charity: Or lastly, whether we confider them according to their different gifts, as opening the spiritual sense of the Scriptures, unfolding many wonderful fecrets in the kingdoms of nature and grace, and using every argument and motive which zeal and love can supply, to prevail with their brethren to forfake the vanities of time, that they may be bleffed with the riches of eternity. rious Saints! happy are you, whether living, dying or departed, whether united to Christ in his

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his suffering states, or made partakers of his joy, crucised with him, or beholding his glory on Mount Tabor. The world indeed knows you not, but you know it, and therefore are not of it. Most have rejected your testimony, but not all, for many have been convinced and converted by that demonstration of spirit and of power which is in your words and writings, and have received from you of that unction wherewith you have been anointed of the holy one, and who will be as so many precious jewels in your crown of rejoicing at the last day, when you shall shine as the Sun in the Kingdom of your Father.

The figns before mentioned, both in a work of judgment and of grace at this time concurring and increasing, do, in their opposite fpheres, point to one and the same end, viz. the restoration of all things, by the perfecting of the Saints, and the extirpation of the incorrigibly wicked: And this difference of figns arises from the different natures of the kingdoms, in which they are manifested, according to that distinction of St. Austin: "Two Loves founded two cities upon earth; the love of Self founded the city of this world, which is called Babylon; and the Love of God was " the builder of the city of God, which is " called Jerusalem *." Now in these two cities or kingdoms the figns must be suited to W

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^{*} August. De Civitate Dei. Civitates duas fecerunt amores duo, &c.

the different natures of the inhabitants respectively; and fo this twofold dispensation converging to one point, if judiciously applied, will reconcile fome feemingly repugnant prophecies concerning the last days: Thus Amos * fays: It shall be darkness and not light, even very dark; but then in verse 18, he speaks of it as respecting the ungodly: And yet Zecharias + speaking of the time when the Lord shall come with his Saints, fays; It shall come to pass that at evening-time it shall be light: To what other meaning than this? That to the children of the kingdom light shall rise up in the darkness. This double work of judgment and mercy running parallel in the two opposite kingdoms, is also signified by the evangelical prophet ‡, where, after describing the final destruction of Babylon the great, he introduces the burden of Dumab (that Idumean or Edomitish race which was the type of the heathenish or false Christians) crying out in mockery to the watchman or spiritual monitor (declaring the dark and dead state of the church) and faying, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? To which call the watchman answers thus: The morning cometh, and also the night: If ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. As if he had faid: There is hastening on a time of great judgment and of great mercy; and if ye defire in good earnest to know what the Lord is about to do in the earth, lay afide your derifion, and enquire

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^{*} Amos v. 20. + Chap. xiv. 6. # Ifa. xxi.

as ye ought to do, in repentance and turning unto the Lord, that he may have mercy upon you in the great and terrible day that is coming upon all flesh, that so your darkness may be turned into light *! This mixt state of good and

* The children of the kingdom at times are not without their darkness, doubts and fears, for they stand in two principles; and though they have the light of life in their spiritual or regenerate part, yet in their animal nature, which is under the law and the curfe, they have a judgment-work to pass through, and their faith is tried with much obscurity befalling them with respect to their own state. (See a Treatise by Johannes à cruce called Obscura Non anima.) However the candle of the Lord, which is the divine fire and light within them (though extinguished in the wicked) leaves them not in total darkness, but penetrates their night. It is otherwise in the passage to regeneration, where the work is carried on by a speedy tranfition, and not in the more usual way of a gradual process, for in the former case the soul passes through an exercise of great anguish and total darkness for a short time, proceeding even to despondency. This seems signified by Abram's deep fleep, when a horror of great darkness fell upon him at the going down of the fun: (Genefis xxv.) denoting the flruggle and great conflict betwixt nature and grace, when the light of the former ceases to be the ruling principle in the foul, and that of the latter succeeds to it. After this horror of great darkness that befel Abram, we read that when the fun went down, or was fet, Abram faw in his vision a burning lamp that passed be-tween the pieces of the facrifice; by which we may understand the true light of life, which is the lamp of the Lord; (Pfal. xviii. 28. Prov. xx. 27.) and then immediately follow these words: In that same day the Lord made a coverant with Abram. But what other Covenant are we to understand here, than the blessing of the New Covenant, that day of Christ which Abram then faw; in which Covenant is the new heart, and new spirit, and the blotting out of fin (Jer. xxxi. 33. Ezek. xi. 19. Heb. and bad at the awful period of Christ's second advent, is expresly mentioned in many parts of the New Testament, where some things are spoken of that world or generation of men that lyeth in wickedness, without saith, without love, without God; and others of the children of the kingdom, who are bid to look up, and take courage under the fearful signs and judgments of the last times, as being told, that their complete redemption from sin and suffering draweth nigh. And this consideration calls for a word of warning, and a word of consolation, to both respectively.

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viii. 10.) to which Covenant is annexed the Promise of the good Land so often made to Abram and his feed. Let not fuch as fee only a literal narrative, and not also a mystical sense in this passage, be offended with those who fee both, not only here, but throughout the history of this renowned and typical character. That is a manifest error which fome maintain and defend, not from their own experience but from their fystem; that the regenerate do always walk in the light and comfort of God's Holy Spirit; for they have their obscure times, as was observed before, when their light is neither clear nor dark, not day nor night, (Zech. xiv. 6, 7.) and yet one day known to the Lord. To fuch a mixt state of darkness and light, I am fully perfuaded that persons in this dispensation can testify: But then although, as to their outward infirmities in their common nature, they appear like other men, yet are they far otherwise. As we are now in the Evening of the Sixth Day, I believe it is a time of uncommon darkness in general, even with the children of the day, and that they are now passing through an eclipse; and yet I do believe alfo, that fome among them may have already paffed through it, and that the millennial glory does even now dawn upon their fouls; though much is to be done in the earth, before Paradife will have its manifestation in outward nature.

Men and brethren, can ye not discern the figns of the times held forth to you in judgment and in mercy, and in the course of this world, as foretold in the Scriptures? And is there not a cry gone forth, and now going forth, in this mid-night-state of the church, faying: Behold, the Bridegroom cometh! go ve out to meet bim! * Or is it with you according to that complaint of the prophet +: " The " flork in the heaven knoweth her appointed " time, and the turtle, and the crane, and " the fwallow observe the time of their com-" ing; but my people know not the judg-" ment of the Lord." You cannot fay, that you want warning; for the Lord hath fet his watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem with command not to keep filence: And among them who have been found faithful to warn their brethren of their danger, how many in return for their labours of love have been requited with mockery, and the casting out their names as evil! But wherefore do you hate your best friends who only awake you, that you may not fleep the fleep of death? Or what would it profit you if you should gain the whole world, and lofe your own fouls? And as to you, the more decent professors, who pretend some fort of affection for the heavenly Bridegroom; how many among you are to be told, that as yet you are no better than foolish Virgins, whilst with the Lamp of an outward profession in your hands, you remain void of

^{*} Matth. xxv. 6.

[†] Jer. viii. 7.

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the Oyl of Grace in your hearts. It is now mid-night, and before the morning-watch the Bridegroom cometh; why then do you fpend your time in disputing and contending about which has the best Lamp, seeing that without the Oyl of Charity, the best will be of no more use than the worst, to light you to the Marriage?

And now for a word of confolation to the patient waiter for the kingdom, tho' in much tribulation: And here let me bid you God speed! and to be of good heart; for he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry, and his reward is with him *. He will foon manifest his power and great glory, and come among us; and then the kingdom of Antichrist, and of the Dragon, in all its forms of tyranny, oppression and ungodliness, shall be broken in pieces, and the meek of the earth, now despised and trampled on, shall possess the gates of their enemies; and all the Lord's afflicted fervants, many of whom are now hardly allowed to eat their morfel in quietness, and some of them have scarcely a morfel to eat, shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord +. There shall then be no enmity, but all as fellow-members of the same body will help and love one another, and rejoice together: Nay, there shall be no more jealoufy, or fear of harm, throughout the animal creation; but the lion and lamb

* Rev. xxii. 12. + Joel, ii. 26.

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shall lye down together, and the birds of the air shall perch upon the hands of men: Paradise, as a heavenly tincture, shall assimilate and temper all the discordant properties of the elements, harmonize the whole system of nature, and make all things new; the holy Angels shall be our fellows, and God and men be as loving friends, and every thing that hath breath shall praise the Lord.

The prospect of this restitution of all things to their original conflitution and beauty, and of man to his original happiness in paradife (if not greater) when the espoulals between Christ and his Beloved shall be fully ratified; all the promifes concerning his royal glory shall be fully accomplished; and when the whole creation shall be delivered from that bondage of corruption, under which it now groans, to the unutterable praise of the great Redeemer: The prospect, I say, of so bleffed a change to take place on earth, is so highly desirable and transporting, that I cannot see how the reader can refrain from fobscribing with me to what Dr. Hickes + has fo warmly delivered on this fubject in the following paffage. "Who would " not defire to reign with Christ upon earth? "Who would not wish to be a citizen of the " New Jerusalem? To see the grand Jubilé, " and live in the bleffed Millennium? Or not " defire fuch a happy revolution as this must

⁺ See his Epille Dedicatory to the History of Montanism.

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" make upon earth? Who is there that would " not long to fee this acceptable year of the " Lord, the Marriage of the Lamb, the glori-" ous king dom of the Messiah, and say in his " heart, Come Lord Jesus! come quickly! I " verily believe, there is not one among the "Clergy, unless he should be an Atheist, who " would not be glad to fee the approaches of " fuch a bleffed change, little lefs to be defired " than heaven by them and all other men. "is well known how many Clergymen have " written on the bleffed Millenniam; and that " fome of them now living have, upon com-" putation of the prophetical times, foretold "the commencement of it within a very few " years; and God grant their computation of "it may be true! Certainly, there is not one " believing Clergyman in the church who will " not join with me in this prayer, and heartily " wish he may live to see such a state of earth-" ly happiness, as is incomparably more defir-" able than to be a Bishop of the most opulent "church. For my own part, were I a king, " great and happy as Augustus Cæsar, I would " willingly put my scepter in the hand of King " Jesus, and lay my crown at his feet, and cry " as loud and as heartily as Mr. Lacy: Hofan-" nab in the highest! Blessed is he that cometh " in the name of the Lord: Hofannah in the " bighest !"

The learned and pious Dr. Henry More has enlarged on many curious particulars relating to the millennial kingdom, in his Divine Dia-

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logues,

logues, which abound with much of religious entertainment, both rational and spiritual. In Dial. IV. p. 281. he observes, that the great purpose of that early begun and long continued negotiation of the Son of God with us, terreftrial creatures, " has been the enlarging the " kingdom of God, even to these earthly regi-"ons; that the kingdom of heaven may also " be upon earth, perfectly corresponding to the " heavenly pattern thereof: And therefore the " ultimate end of the dispensations of divine " providence is, to reduce the church to an "angelical state or condition:" And accordingly in p. 313, he puts the following words into the mouth of Philopolis, with which I shall conclude my testimonies. "This Ange-" lical Kingdom, as you call it, wherein God's " will shall be done on earth as it is in hea-"ven, is a kingdom of righteousness, and " peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoft. O how " am I transported with the view of so glo-" rious a prospect! I shall henceforth pray " Thy Kingdom come, with a more peculiar em-" phasis than I have ever yet done in all my " life."

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A MEDITATION on the Ixviith Pfalm, as applied to the second Coming of Christ to reign with his Saints on earth.

OW great is the goodness of God! who dwelling in light inaccessible, which no flesh can behold and live, hath revealed himfelf to us by his beloved Son in the likeness of finful flesh, and so in a way suited to the weakness of our mortal nature, to conduct the great work of our redemption. But he who heretofore humbled himself in meanness and difgrace, even to the death of the cross, will appear again a fecond time in dignity and honour, when he shall come to glorify, and to be glorified in his Saints, and to fashion them like unto his glorious body: " Before him " shall be gathered all nations, and he shall " feparate them one from another as a shep-"herd divideth his sheep from the goats *." In that great day may

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Verse 1. God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and shew us the light of his countenance, and be merciful unto us!

How unsearchable are thy judgments, O Lord, and thy ways past finding out, even by them that love thy name! But if such be the dimness of those that are called the children of light; if so weak be now their faith, so short

^{*} Matth. xxv. 32.

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their fight in the things of thy kingdom; how great is the darkness of those that sit in the shadow of death, who know thee not, and never heard of thy name! But do thou, who art the way, the truth and the life, hasten the time for the fuller manifestation of thy grace, thy goodness and thy glory,

Verse 2. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. This alludes to a supposition offered in this work, concerning the Heathens being allowed a time of probation in the New Earth.

Thy fovereignty, O God, is very great, and to be acknowledged of all in the diffinction of thy favours, but not in excluding any from thy mercies; for the Lord is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works *. He did indeed confirm a Covenant of special favour by oath unto Isaac, and appointed the same unto Jacob for a law +, even an inheritance in the Land of Promife, wherein they in this life were only strangers: Nay, perhaps he hath ordained a certain number of his elect fervants unto fore-appointed glory by a decree which altereth not: " But is he the God of the Jews, " and not also of the Gentiles? Yea, of the "Gentiles also ±;" for he hath promised, that he will speak peace to the Heathens ||; and that all the ifles of the Heathen shall worship him §: 21

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Nor will we murmur with the selfish Jew or partial Christian, because of the extent of this great salvation, when he shall come to enlarge the borders of his Zion, but rejoice the more, and say,

Verse 3. Let the people praise thee, O God; yea, let all the people praise thee!

What tyranny and oppression, what wrong and robbery do now prevail upon earth! where might overcomes right, and the wicked devourth the man that is more righteous than he *. And will it always be so? It will not; for when the Lord of glory shall establish his throne in Sion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the Saints of the Most High +, then violence and oppression shall be known no more ‡, but mercy and truth shall meet together, righteousness and peace shall kiss each other ||. In the comfortable hope and expectation of this thy blessed reign, O Lord,

Verse 4. Let the nations rejoice and be glad; for thou shalt judge the folk righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.

Verse 5. Let the people praise thee, O God; yea, let all the people praise thee!

* Hab. i. 13. † Dan. vii. 27. ‡ Ifa. lx. 18. Zech. ix. 8. | Pfal. lxxxv. 10.

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What striving and fighting is here for the largest share of this world's perishing goods! What appropriating of the common bleffings of nature, and fo frustrating the designs of providence in having provided fufficiently for all! Hence it is, that the needy cry out for lack of bread, whilft the covetous hoard up their fuperfluous wealth, and the prodigals spend it in riotous living; fo turning their bleffings into curses, by withholding what is due to their poor brethren: But in Christ's kingdom it will be far otherwise, for there every one in his different rank of glory will have enough, and be content with his portion and lot, whilft nature produces her riches without stint in variety unspeakable: Her fruits will be all perfect, without any worm of corruption at the root, and free from every noxious quality and intoxicating power: The returns of appetite will be continued, that the returns of innocent gratifications may supply the more frequent occafions of praise and thanksgiving to the bountiful Giver of all good things: All the productions of the new earth shall be exalted to a celestial virtue and essence, and, like the fruit of the tree of life, exhilarate the heart: Corn shall make the young men chearful, and new wine the maids *. No enjoyment will be wanting that can minister delight to pure and innocent beings, and every enjoyment will be fanctified with religious gratitude. In all fulness and perfection of this fense is the following promise given:

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Verse 6. Then shall the earth bring forth her increase; and God, even our God, shall give us his blessing.

The greatest comforts lose much of their true relish, when held by an uncertain tenure: But how infecure are we here, both in our persons and possessions, from foreign or domestic foes! living in constant jealousies and fears, and under greater necessity of providing for our defence against our own species, than even against the wild beasts, insomuch that this world may be compared to a den of thieves and robbers, against whose open attacks or secret treachery we are never in perfect fafety: But in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the Lord will be our defence, the power of the Almighty will be our fafe-guard; of whom then shall we be afraid? The reason why we are in fuch continual danger here from one another, is because there is so little of the fear of God in the world, to restrain the wickedness of men; fo little of the true power of religion to fubdue the evil that is in human nature; but in the millennial kingdom, all the subjects of it will be children of the regeneration *: The filial fear of God will be upon them all, as

^{*} The Heathens, as observed before, who are admitted to a probationary state in the New Earth, will not be the proper subjects of the blessed Kingdom, nor, by reason of the incapacity arising from their different condition of existence, partake in paradisal selicity, till they shall be confirmed in grace: However, they will have a glimpse of the glory of the holy City, and walk in the light thereof, to animate them in their Christian course. Rev. xxi. 24.

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the fear of man will be upon all the inferior creatures. Thus all things will be in their proper order and place, as heretofore in paradife before the Fall, when all the creatures, by the law of their natures, were in subjection to man, as man was in subjection to God. Under this blessed theocracy, what can disturb our tranquillity and peace, or rather what can be wanting to our joy and complete happiness feeing that,

Verse 7. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the world shall fear him.

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And now, dear Reader, what hast thou to object against a doctrine so well attested, and fo full of comfort? That righteousness, truth and innocence; that joy, peace, and perfect reconciliation betwixt God and man might be restored on earth, must be the wish of every one that is not lost to all sense of difference betwixt good and evil: but that which would naturally be the wish of every reasonable man, becomes the object of our hope, nay, an article of our faith, when revealed and promifed by the God of truth. Where then is the offence of a doctrine which holds forth that as near at hand, which should be our greatest joy to fee already come to pass? We pray, that disorder, fin and misery may have an end; but that end will only be, when Christ's Kingdom shall come, that God's will may be done in earth as it is in heaven: Let us pray then, that the Lord will accomplish the number of his elect 70

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elect and hasten his kingdom: And as be which testisseth these things saith, Surely I come quickly*; even so let it be the prayer of our faith, and the prayer of our hearts, saying, Come Lord Jesus! come quickly!

THE CONCLUSION.

T remains to advertise the Reader, that as the main scope of this work was to reprefent the credibility of this doctrine of Christ's glorious Reign with his Saints on Earth, from fuch authority of divine and human testimonies, as occurred in the course of it; so I trust that I have in all good conscience, according to the best of my judgment, made an upright and undifguifed use of them, and been exact in all my translations, quotations, and references, using caution all the way, not to impose upon the reader, or myself. Had I been better supplied with proper books, of which I found a want at times, this performance would have been much more complete; but I am well content, that my many and great defects both in learning and judgment may be supplied by the abler pens of fuch among my Reverend Brethren of the Clergy, or others, who may come after me upon this subject. And if I shall be found to have advanced any thing, either in the foregoing or few following sheets of this volume, that is contrary to found doc-

* Rev. xxii. 20.

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trine, and the tenor of Catholic faith, I declare myself ready upon conviction to make a publick retractation of it. As my principal drift has been only to support the truth of the doctrine of the Millennium as to the substance of it, fo I defire to be understood, as laying no more stress upon the particular modes and circumstances of it, than scriptural authority will justify, referving however to myself the lawful right of private judgment, and innocent opinions which clash not with any principles of true religion, which are here modestly offered. not obtruded on any, leaving many particulars (which perhaps some have too rigorously infifted on) to the private perfuation of the reader. Accordingly I have attempted nothing in the way of decifive proof; First, As to the exact space of time appointed for the duration of this kingdom, whether as meaning a thoufand years according to our computation of time, or any longer period. Secondly, Whether the administration of it will be under the constant abiding presence of our Lord's visible humanity, or only occasional manifestations of it, whilft the government, for the most part, may devolve upon the apostles and patriarchs as his vice-gerents under the immediate influences and conduct of the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, Whether the universal conflagration shall be before or after the millennial reign. Or fourthly, Whether the true and proper subjects of this bleffed kingdom (exclusive of the probationary Heathens) will confift only of the living Saints, and fuch as shall be immediately raised from e=

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from the dead upon our Lord's advent, as the Martyrs and other first-fruits unto God and the Lamb, * (implying after-fruits in the same dispensation) or whether there shall not be a continued fuccession of the redeemed ones raised from the dead, following according to their order + and time, as was the belief of Irenæus ‡ and Tertullian | among others, and which I think is deducible from, and gives light to some passages in Scripture §. These and many more particulars relating to the New Jerusalem-state are left to others who see more circumstantially into it, or till they shall be manifested in due time.

If after what has been offered in support of this doctrine, any reader should still continue unperfuaded, and not inclined to allow of any fuch happy condition appointed for the Saints, fhort of their ultimate and complete felicity in heaven, yet let not fuch be offended, if the belief of an intermediate and inferior state of

of a flate of purification after death.

^{*} Rev. xiv. 4. † 1 Cor. xv. 23. I Lib. Lib. iii. Adversus Marcionem. v. cap. 32.

[§] Mr. Mede, pag. 618. gives the following remark: Some of the Fathers supposed, that the divine fire of " Christ's body at his coming, should stretch even to " the fouls of the dead; and that fuch as had departed " out of this life not fully purged of fin by repentance, " should not be found fire proof at that day, but be re-" fined cum morâ & dolore, before their resurrection to " Christ's kingdom. Cyprian. Epist. 52." It is not to be doubted that the Romish church did build up the hay and stubble of their Purgatory on this ancient doctrine

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blifs on earth, ferve as a motive to godliness in others: Besides, were this doctrine destitute of that full proof from Scripture which it carries with it, and presented itself to us only in the modest form of an hypothesis; even in that view it has more to recommend it, as it is more interesting, than some ingenious theories of the earth, which have met with fuch a favourable reception: However, I here beg leave to refresh his memory with a short recapitulation of some important heads enlarged upon dispersedly in this work, as they may ferve thus collected to engage him in a more fuccessful attention to the subject. Now, the belief of fuch a glorious dispensation to take place on earth, may ferve as a means to wean the hearts of fuch as are under strong attachments to the love and pursuit of happiness in this world, from all infnaring fondness for the perishing things of it, and to animate them to patience and felf-denial in their Christian course under the encouraging prospect of precious promises of better things in a far better state of it. It folves many dark riddles in the ways of providence; opens many mysteries which are a stumbling-block to reason; and answers that objection of this world's being only a place for folly, fin and mifery, by shewing that all the evil which Satan hath introduced in it, shall turn to his own shame, when the second Adam thall wrest his asurped dominion from him, and expell him into the regions of his own darkness. It justifies the ways of God towards e

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towards man, by providing a gratuitous retribution to the Saints in time, for the greater injuries and fufferings which they have endured in time for righteousness-sake; plucks the scepter of government from the tyrant and oppresfor, and puts it in the hands of the fervants of God. It gives full display to the wonders of God's wisdom and power in the beauties and riches of creation; opens a free communication betwixt heaven and earth, and fo brings near things that were afar off. It exalts Christ where he was abased, and glorifies him, where he was crucified; and divides between the two component principles of this world, good and evil, giving to the Prince of each his feparate Throne and Kingdom. It reveals the facred Trinity in more conspicuous distinction than any other doctrine, as it represents the eternal Father exalting the Majesty of his beloved Son over a world of his own redeeming, whilst the Holy Ghost adds such power to the fanctity of his Saints, that miracles will be common things. In a word, a fettled religious faith in this holy and glorious state of the church, as prefigured, foretold and promifed in the Scriptures throughout, pours amazing light on the facred Volume; is a key to many wonderful fecrets in the fystem of this world, and opens paradife lost in paradife restored, whilst man rifes to supreme bliss by a gradual ascent on the scale of perfection, and is changed from glory to glory: It comforts the fuffering Christian under all his trials and afflictions during this short reign of ungodliness, Aa 2

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and, in a well-grounded hope of his glorious inheritance with the Saints, fills his heart with joy unspeakable. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second Death hath no power; but they shall be Priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years *. Reader, May thou and I be of this happy number! Amen!

* Rev. xx. 6.

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MYSTICAL WRITERS;

Against some REFLECTIONS in a late WORK,

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DOCTRINE of GRACE:

OR, THE

OFFICE and OPERATIONS of the HOLY SPIRIT vindicated, &c.

BY WILLIAM, LORD BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER.

S fesus Christ will have a triumphant church or kingdom, and reign with his saints on earth, so has he already a kingdom in, though not of this world, of which he is the Sovereign and influencing Head by the office of his Holy Spirit in the hearts of his subjects; so preparing them for the glories of his outward reign. In this dispensation of the Spirit he perfects what was lacking in the external A a 3 economy

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conomy of our redemption under the different ministrations of the law and the prophets. and his own ministry after the flesh *; for here types + have their substance, ordinances their end, and the letter its life: Here he is the true Father of a chosen Generation and royal Priesthood; the Regenerator of the divine Image, and the Repairer of the Breach; here he brings home the loft sheep to his fold, and receives the returning prodigal; and here "he " fits as a refiner and purifier of filver, that " he may purge the fons of Levi as gold and " filver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness ‡." So highly precious above every thing that can be named by the tongues of men or angels is Christ in us, the hope of glory ||. It is the more needful to add fomething on this subject, as well to keep the reader in mind of the spirituality of true religion, as the necessary preparative for the millennial kingdom, as because the former has of late years been to injuriously attacked thro' the fides of the spiritual, called Mystical Writers, who are and have been the true teachers of Gospel-salvation, and the guardians of pure and undefiled religion, under Christ the King of faints, in every age of the church to the prefent times.

The church or kingdom of Christ in our present condition of mortality, is in a militant state, having a warfare to accomplish; and its

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^{*} John xvi. 7. + John vii. 39. Heb. ix. 9. † Mal. iii. 3. | Col. i. 27.

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enemies are many and mighty: "We wreftle " not, fays the apostle, against slesh and blood " [only], but against principalities, against " powers, against the rulers of the darkness " of this world, against spiritual wickedness " in high places *." How powerful a friend then do we stand in need of for our defence against such formidable foes? And how insufficient would man be for his own fafety, if left to the weakness of his reason against such mighty spiritual intelligences, as Satan and his Angels, who laugh at the shaking of this his boafted spear, and before whom his fancied strength of iron is but as straw, and his brass of confidence as rotten wood +. Now how and where is this great friend and captain of our falvation to be our help and strength? As a distant or a present God? Is he not to be with us, nay, to be in us, according to his promise and our need of him ‡: Is not his kingdom within us, if we are his true fubjects ||? And our hearts the habitation of God through his Spirit §? Or has the murderer free access to the life of our souls, but not the avenger of blood and the true redeemer? The spirit of error to seduce us, but not the Spirit of truth to guide us? Away then with all those false teachers! who like thieves and robbers are for depriving the poor Christian of his best hope and help. What a strange local God do all fuch make of their Saviour, whilst they

^{*} Ephes. vi. 12. + Job xli. I 2 Cor. § Eph. ii. 22. vi. 16. Luke xvii. 21.

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thut him up in a distant heaven, and tell us, that we are only to know him now by the letters of a book. Praised be God for the Volume of the Book! For it is a precious gift, and does a most friendly office to the poor bewildered traveller, who has left his God and loft his way, by pointing as a hand to the right road, or as an infcribed pillar in the outer court directs him to the inward: But if, instead of pursuing its directions to the holy place, we stop short and facrifice to the pillar; if we fet up the written testimony above him to whom it testifieth as the way, the truth and the life, and as the divine and living word of the Lord that endureth for ever, and which by the gospel is preached unto us *, and abideth in 115 +: In this case may we not be said, to commit idolatry in the porch of the Lord's house? Hence it is, that so many study the Scriptures all their life long without finding the way which the Scriptures plainly teach, because instead of pursuing the directions therein laid down, they only wrangle about the chatacters and various acceptations of the words. How easy to be understood is that precept written on this pillar of truth: Seek ye after God, and your foul shall live 1: What can be plainer except the following comment upon it: Bleffed are they that keep his testimonies, and feek him with their whole heart | . But how will the worldly wife, who referve their hearts for

^{* 1} Pet. i. 25. † 1 John ii. 14. † Psal. lxix. 33. | Pfal. cxix. 2.

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other purposes, comment upon these words? Why thus: Blessed are they that seek him in sundry books and diverse languages, and various opinions; that seek him in multiplicity of forms and many inventions, and much criticism. Can we then want an interpreter to the sollowing words written on the same pillar? They shall seek me, but shall not find me *.

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As religion has both an infide and an outfide, according to the twofold nature of man, so the word Church may be considered under the twofold distinction of visible and invisible; or, in other words, the spiritual and ecclesiastical states: And these, according to their true nature and defign, are not contrary or divided, but united and mutually helpful to each other, the one being the body, the other the foul of religion; and where they are thus conjoined, they make together the beauty of holiness, and the power of godliness, diffusing itself through fociety in all the relative duties and focial virtues. Here the king's daughter is all glorious within, appears cloathed with wrought gold; and the church is like a well-proportioned body, animated by a living foul, and vigorous in both parts of its constitution, where all the members have fellowship one with another in ready fervice and fympathizing love, each by its office supplying what is lacking to the increase and welfare of the whole. Here God is glorified by the true worshippers in body

* Prov. i. 28.

and in spirit, in unity as well as uniformity; and the outward, visible fign and office minifter to, and go along with the inward and fpiritual grace. Such was once the condition of the Christian church in the early days of it, and a type of its still more perfect condition in a future state of it, viz. "When all were of one " heart and of one foul, neither faid any of " them, that ought of the things that he pos-" fessed was his own *." But though both these parts of the church, like mens sana in corpore sano, are requisite in order to its perfect health and foundness, yet they may subfift separately, the form without the power, and the power without the form, though such a divifion may properly be called a difeafed state on the one fide, and a dead state on the other. A person separated through accident or necessity from all connexion with Christian people, may be a true member of Christ's mystical body or spiritual church, though he communicates not with his fellow-members in any way of external worship: Or should any particular church, calling itself Christian, fall into so horrid an apostacy as to deny any of the primary and fundamental articles of the Christian faith, as the Divinity of our bleffed Saviour, or the immediate operations of his Holy Spirit; or should persecute the true believers: In this case the bond of union would be diffolved, and there could be no more vital communion betwixt the visible and invisible church, than there can

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be fellowship between the living and the dead. In times so calamitous, the faithful witnesses of Jesus, though dispersed and single (nay, were it only a fingle person) would be the church in her wilderness state, where Christ would nourish them with fuch supplies of his Spirit, as would be more to them than any outward ordinances or ministrations whatever. Such was the deplorable state of things, when the wicked Jezebel and her Baalitish crew bore rule in Ifrael, and persecuted the prophets of the Lord: Then Elijab in the wilderness was a type of the true Woman in her outward desolate condition, oppressed and hunted by the red Dragon: And thus it has been in the persecuting times of the Christian church, not only before but fince her establishment, as ecclesiastical history too well informs us, when almost every attempt towards reformation in doctrine and the revival of the gospel-purity was at the expence of the blood of the Reformers. Now when fuch a hatred to truth and godliness at any time prevails, the visible church, with all her boast of succession and establishment, is in the thickest dregs of her degeneracy, and no better than a compound of Babylon, Beast and Harlot, for where the form of godliness is without the power of it, the Devil eafily flips into the empty form, and plays the ape in the fanctuary. But as in Elijab's days, when the Prophet gave all over for loft, it was revealed to him, that the Lord had left himfelf seven thousand true worshippers; so doubtless now the same Lord has a remnant lest who.

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who worship him in spirit and in truth, even in the most corrupt church, and it is to be hoped, in a larger proportion than the seven thousand bore to the opposite number in Israel; and therefore we should be cautious how we pronounce any church or communion of Christians as under a total apostacy, or without making large exceptions; for that common saying, that there are good and bad of all sorts, is founded on truth as well as charity.

The propension of human nature to idolatry is of greater extent and force than is generally supposed, and prevails more than is believed among those that profess the religion of Christ. I do not only mean here the worshippers of images and other representations of Christ and his Saints (though this practice is a glaring proof of it) but also that superstitious trust which so many in every church place in the visible institutes of religion for their acceptance with God, fo turning things, even of divine appointment, into the occasion of their sin: Thus the frequenting places of publick worship, forms of prayer, hearing fermons, facraments, and other ordinances of religion, however obligatory and excellent in their right use, as means, or figns of, or helps to that worship which is in spirit and truth, yet when set up in the room of it, and as the end instead of the means, as if thereby we did an acceptable fervice to God, and thence draw matter for felf-complacency and felf-justification; in this case we make them our Saviours, and are guilty

THE MYSTICAL WRITERS. 365 of idolatry. This excessive fondness for visible things and fuch as strike the senses, to the resting in them, is a fruitful root of superstitions in every church, and keeps many profeffors in a state of childhood all their days, that they cannot go on unto perfection *. But there is another species of idolatry the less observed as it is more refined, and therefore the more dangerous, viz. the fetting up of opinions under the name of doctrines, and the contending for them more zealously, than for vital godliness; now as the former error may be called in the words of the prophet, fetting stumbling-blocks before our faces; so this may be called fetting up idols in our hearts +. What strife is here about mere opinions rather than just distinctions concerning modes of faith, justification, election and the circumstantials of the two Sacraments, to the dividing the body of Christ, and neglecting the substance of things hoped for? Is not charity more than opinion? Why then do we give up that which is greater, only that we may fight about that which is less? Does thy faith lead thee to God in Chrift, and to Chrift in God? Does it overcome the world, purify the heart and work by love? Then hast thou a right faith, then thou art in grace, thou art justified, thou art an elect fervant, and hast nothing more to do, . but to take heed lest thou fall: But if otherwife, where is thy justification, where is thy election? Is thy heart right as my heart in the

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^{*} Heb. vi. 1. † Ezek. xiv.

belief of this? Then give me thy hand, and let us conform in things indifferent, and wave opinions and all doubtful disputations: How foon might the difference be ended? Can we read in Church-history the fierce disputes, proceeding even to separation, between angry men of little minds, about vestments, postures, fervice-books, nay, the naming of a church-table*, with other like ceremonies and distinctions, and forbear saying, Unwise children, wherefore did ye quarrel about such little matters? Are these the things that commend us to God either way? But when men forsake the fountain of living waters, thus do they hew unto themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water †.

Under the Levitical economy, in which ordinances and the temple services were many and complicated, it was natural for a people who did not see into their mystical meaning, to run their religion into the external form of it; and accordingly they rested in the ceremonial law for their acceptance, and so were Jews, not in the spirit, but only in the letter. In order to help their weakness and recover them from their error, it pleased God to make a provision for this evil by sending them prophets from time to time, to reprove their backslidings, to call them to the religion of the heart, and to explain the spiritual sense of the law and its types: And these may properly be called the

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^{*} See Neale's Hist. of the Puritans, vol. I. p. 44, 73, &c. † Jer. ii. 13.

THE MYSTICAL WRITERS. 367

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Mystics of their dispensation, as unfolding to them the great mystery of godliness. Now our gracious Lord has made the fame provision for the benefit of fuch of his poor weak children under the gospel, as are not yet subject to the leadings of his own good Spirit, which is the promise of this better covenant; whether they are without the use of the Scriptures; or have not the Scriptures opened to them according to the true life and spirit of them in the ordinary way; or are fallen into such dead times when all is dark around them; in these or like cases, he has been pleased to raise up from among their brethren friendly guides gifted with extraordinary measures of his Grace and Holy Spirit, to do the office of apostles, prophets and evangelists, for the instruction and edifying of the body of Christ, that his people might not be carried away with every wind of new or false doctrine by the crastiness of men who lye in wait to deceive, or the ignorance of those who have not the key of knowledge, or the maliciousness of them who take it away from the people, and so neither enter themselves into the kingdom, nor suffer others. And here we have great cause to praise God for that he hath at times vouchfafed to fend many fuch spiritual instructors, even in the darkest times of Popery, to serve as lights to their brethren, in their night of ignorance and superstition, to lead them into the knowledge of the truth, not according to the beggarly elements of science, falsely so called, but freely dealing out to them the things that were given them of God, " not in " the words which man's wifdom teacheth. " but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, com-" paring spiritual things with spiritual *." And praised be God that so many of their visible writings have been dispersed through the Protestant churches, as they have been highly instrumental to the divine life in many, and may ferve as a good means, when more generally known, to cure them of that contentious theology which has so infected their several systems; to heal their breaches, and to tincture them more deeply with the divine grace of Charity. The great use of these spiritual or mystical writers, in whatever age or church they lived, feems acknowledged amongst us by the translations of many of them out of all languages into our own; and they have made their way notwithstanding all the opposition that might be expected from the common prejudices raised against them. The learned Translator of the Spiritual Homilies of Macarius +, one of the most celebrated mystical Fathers (who flourished in the fourth century, and to whom many miracles are afcribed both by Palladius and Socrates the Historian) opens the Introduction to his Translation thus: " All I " pretend to in this work is to naturalize an " old Father (if I may be allowed the expref-" fion) for the benefit of God's church and " religion, that he may do afresh his ancient " wonders upon a corrupt and degenerate age,

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^{* 1} Cor. ii. 13.

[†] Printed for Innys, 1721.

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" in which not only obsolete errors revive " daily, but there feems to be a general diffo-" lution of manners, our morals being as he-" retical as our opinions." This ancient Father is indeed charged with obscurity in many places, as well as fome other writers of his class, and the charge in part is confessed; but when it is urged against the Mystic Writers promiscuously, it is injudiciously urged, many of them being as plain and intelligible as any other Practical Writers whatever; though it must be allowed that there are in some of them things hard to be understood, at first, as well as in the Scriptures; for as a judicious Author observes *: " When we have said all "that we can; the secret mysteries of a new " nature and divine life can never be suffici-"ently expressed: Language and words can-" not reach them; nor can they be truly un-" derstood but by those souls that are enkindled " within, and awakened into the fense and re-" lish of spiritual things: There is a spirit in " men, and the inspiration of the Almighty " giveth this understanding." Besides, let it here be observed, that the same proposition or doctrine which one person may see clearly, and be convinced of as evident truth, may be unintelligible to another of equal capacity in other things, nay, may give offence to him: To adduce only one instance of a hundred that might be quoted, in the Mystic Writers, from

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^{*} The Life of God in the Soul of Man, published by Bishop Burnet.

the xxxth Homily of the holy Macarius, On the New Birth, where, after speaking of our Lord's fufferings and death for our fakes, he adds as follows: " All this labour and pain " did he undergo with this view, that he might beget out of himself, out of his own " nature, children of the Spirit; being well " pleased that they should be born from above. out of his divine nature: And as Fathers " with us are grieved if they have no chil-" dren; so also the Lord, having loved man-" kind as his own image, was willing to beget " them of his own feed, the divine nature. If " therefore any have no mind to come to fuch " a kind of birth, and to be born of the " Womb of the Spirit, even the divine Na-" ture, great is the forrow which Christ there-" upon conceives, having fuffered and under-" gone so much for them that he might save " them: For the Lord is willing that all men " should be made worthy of this birth, for he " died for all, and hath called them all to life; " but then life is that birth of God which is " from above, and without this it is impol-" fible for the foul to live, as the Lord hath " faid: Except a man be born from above [fo " the word avoider should be rendred] be can-" not see the kingdom of God: And again, as " many as believe the Lord, and coming to " him, are vouchsafed the honour of this birth, " cause their parents that begat them * great

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^{*} This is spoken of spiritual parents under Christ. See I Cor. iv. 15.

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" joy: And all the Angels and holy Powers " rejoice * over the foul that is born of the " Spirit, and become spirit itself." This doctrine of regeneration, though held by the true believer as a fundamental and most venerable truth, not only as it is taught under a great variety of expressions in Scripture, as born and begotten of God, partakers of the divine nature, new man, renewed in the Spirit of our minds, &c. but also as it is the very sum and substance of Gospel-salvation, and the only posfible way of becoming the Sons of God, as Adam was before the fall; though, I fay, the true believer rejoices in this bleffed hope, and embraces this precious promife with his whole heart; yet the disputer of this world, who sets up his idol reason for the judge and standard of divine truths, will be offended at it, and ask with Nicodemus, How can these things be? Nay, the Nicodemuses of our age have done more, for they have dared to revile this great mystery of our redemption, as mystic jargon and enthusiasm: But if the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to such, their highest wisdom is emphatically so with Him. Now the divine Mystics, whether of the clergy or laity, of this or that church, have been in all ages of it, and must continue to be, the guardians and defenders of this grand pillar of divine truth; and as the spiritual doctrines of Christianity, and this in particular, have at any time loft ground in the church, fo in like

* Luke xv. 10.

proportion has infidelity advanced on the other hand, under pretences of afferting the prerogatives of reason: And this will account for that obliquy and vile flander which have been poured out upon the Writers of this class. whether in our own or any other churches, by men that speak evil of persons and things which they know not. That true-hearted and diligent labourer in the mystic school Peter Poiret, speaking of such as are in the true process of regeneration, says, "Who can de-" feribe the qualities and excellencies of these "divine Souls? For this we must consult the " Mysticks, who have written hereof in the " divine light, and were themselves of the " happy number; and if to some they speak " a strange language, it is to the Doctors of " this world who have a doctrine, and hearers "that are of the world; whereas they being " of God, fuch as are not of God cannot hear " them. I shall only say of them; that they " are the pillars and falt of the earth, how-" ever looked upon by some as fools, fanatics, " mad, or melancholy: But God will one "day make it known, that what was done " to them was done to the apple of his eye, " and that they who rejected them rejected " him. O what a happiness is it ever to have " known any fuch! I partly know what it is: " It is an advantage that in truth I would not " change for all the world *."

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^{*} Chapter On Regeneration, Sect. XI.

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This doctrine of the New Birth contains in substance what is called in the Gospel, The Pearl of great Price; and highly valuable indeed it is, for it cost nothing less than the blood of Christ, and is the sum total of the riches of his grace and goodness to fallen man, to make him partaker of the rich glory of his inheritance. This treasure, though in earthen veffels and joined to frailty, the true Mystics are possessed of, which they hide not from their brethren, but delight to communicate to them of their substance, for such is the excellence of all fuch as are rich towards God: But whilft they only defire to know and make known the riches of this great falvation, their brethren which are after the flesh, and resolve to continue so, hate them for it and requite them evil for their good will; for this doctrine is an offence to the pride of the natural man and to the boafted fufficiency of his reason; and therefore from their infifting so much on this, and the other felf-denying doctrines of the gospel, it is, that they reject and strive to discredit their writings; but Wisdom is justified of her children. Let it here be remarked, and constantly remembered, that the true Mystics are not to be taken for a feet or party in the church, or to be confidered as separatists from it, for they renounce all fuch distinctions both in name and deed, being the only people that never formed a fect, nor ever attempted it; nay, for them to undertake it would be just as absurd as to go about to collect a number of persons that should be the first-born from the dead; and therefore B b 3 they

they always continue peaceable members of that church to which they are respectively joined, without caufing any divisions or disturbance therein, looking beyond the shadow to the fubstance, and possessing the power in the form, and so contending with none about forms or shadows. Thus they let their moderation be known unto all, whilft they keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man, rendring unto Cæfar the things that are Cæfar's, and unto God the things that are God's, and submitting, as far as conscientiously they may, to every ordinance of man for the Lord's fake. They are persons of an humble, though difcerning spirit, and well know how to divide the word of truth, and to direct the word of exhortation, both with zeal and charity, without respect of persons; and therefore as they are led to it, they bear their testimony against every thing that is contrary to found doctrine, and against all such errors, delusions and ways as may endanger the falvation of their brethren. Their chief topics are the love of God and our neighbour, self-denial, the bearing of the cross, the contempt of the world, and that worship of the Father which is in spirit and in truth; and these subjects they enforce, not from barren speculations in their heads, but from a vital and fruitful experience of their power in their hearts, whilst they adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, by a life and conversation becoming the gospel of Christ. They labour not to captivate the curious minds, or to scratch the itching ears of their readers and

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and hearers with artificial flowers of rhetoric, studied phrases or pompous language, for divine truth despises these borrowed ornaments of human pride; but they speak directly from the heart and to the heart, and that divine unction which attends their words, gives them Thus our Lord did with eminence of perfection, and his apostles after him, by derivative unction, convert their hearers, not by force of argument and logical deduction, but by demonstration of spirit and power in their hearts. As they feek not the riches of this world, so neither that honour which cometh of man, and so court not the favour of the great, nor flatter them for the fake of advantage; nay, where they find the danger of a fnare in such acquaintances, and that, instead of profiting others, they fuffer loss themselves, they withdraw their attendance, but love and give double honour to fuch among them as fear the Lord. But neither do they feek the honour of being esteemed by their brethren as more godly than others, or than they really are themselves, and therefore put not on any affected appearances of greater piety in their looks, words or ways; for true religion is a nature restored, and therefore all its functions are so far natural and easy; and this is the beauty of holiness. They run not about to tell their experiences, conflicts, falls or victories, nor are foreward to declare in companies what heinous finners they were before their conversion, and what great things the Lord hath fince done for them, knowing that B b 4 under

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under this show of humility there often lurks a fecret pride which the discoverer is not aware of; and yet, where it may be for the glory of God, the edification of their neighbour, or to take deferved shame to themselves, they will not be backward to gublish these things, were it even upon the house-top. As to indifferent things in religion, and meer matters of custom in the general practice, in this or that church, though the true Mystic will not be brought under that subjection to them which lyeth in bondage, yet he will regulate his liberty by the royal law of charity, and will be so far from despising the day of small things in others, that he will cherish the well-meaning, though in the lowest forms and rudiments of religion, with a parental tenderness; nay, lead them by the hand through the first principles of ordinances and doctrines, remembring the time when he also was a child and had need of milk, and thus passed through the outward to the inward: Nay, he prizes the fimplicity of the infantine state in the truly devout, far above that of visions, revelations or extacies, as freer from danger, and bringing nearer to the humility of Jefus in the manger; and, if fuch were the will of God, he would willingly refign all knowledge, and every other thing that appears most excellent in the eye of man's judgment, for the unaffected innocence, filial dependence, and undiffembled love of a little child.

It remains to be observed here, that the word

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word Mystick or Mystic is not a name which they first assumed to themselves, but was given them as a mark of distinction, to denote more particularly the character of fuch as were in any degree eminent as spiritual persons or authors, and applied themselves chiefly to the confideration and exercises of that part of divinity which relates to the inward and spiritual life, and which is therefore called Spiritual or Mystical Theology; for Mystical means nothing more nor less than spiritual. And indeed these Writers (of whom hereafter more particularly) will answer to their name, as it was given to them, according to their different measures, to know the mysteries of the kingdom in a divine light, and were found faithful stewards of the mysteries of God, in dispenfing them to others according to their feveral gifts, as scribes well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven. They have been made to pass with many for unsociable men, leading a life of great austerity, like John the Baptist in the wilderness, or as secluding themselves from all fociety; but this is a mifrepresentation of their character, as making no pecuhar or distinguishing part of it. Many indeed of the most early celebrated Mystics, were among those Christians who in the primitive times fled from persecution into the retired parts of Egypt, where they practifed a strict discipline, and became eminent for their piety and great virtues, as in particular Paul, Anthony and Macarius, among many others; and then it was that the Monastic life was first established

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established on rule and discipline; and whilst the church was under the Papal jurisdiction many of the most illustrious Mystics were among the Regulars of that church; but then they were the lights of it, and may properly be called the true reformers of religion in it, as far as the influence of their instructions and examples reached, whilst all beyond was in general scholastick trumpery, ignorance and fuperstition: However, several, more particularly fince the Reformation, both at home and abroad, have been lay persons of very different stations in life, some in a publick, some in a private character, some of noble birth, fome of low degree; fo that the character of Mystic has nothing to do with such confined limitations and distinctions as Regulars and Seculars, the Cell or the City, Clergy or Laity, for this free gift of God's Spirit, both for illumination and fanctification, is ready for all prepared vessels in every rank and condition; high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, male and female, are all alike called to the spiritual life, whatever their external vocation may be: And it is also confistent with the most complicated relations, and the most active employments; thus the Archbishop, in the faithful discharge of his high office, amidst a thousand avocations from his closet, may be as holy a Mystic as the solitary Hermit; and the most neglected Curate, in his laborious employments of vifiting the fick and burying the dead, from morning till night, &c. with scarcely sufficient for his decent maintenance, may

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may have as true a right to this honourable appellation, and be as high in the spiritual life as the most contemplative Anchoret: In a word, whatever is most excellent in religion, is so far mystical, and every interior Christian is a true Mystic, though he knows not what the name meaneth.

When we say then, that the doctrine of Regeneration, or the New Birth, is principally insisted on by the Mystical Writers, we only mean, that it is most taught and best explained by such as are principally spiritual in every church: But neither does the matter rest here, seeing it must be held doctrinally where it is not held spiritually and experimentally *; forasmuch as it is a doctrine, and a fundamental one too of the Gospel, teaching that work of the Spirit, without which no man can see the kingdom of God. Every church therefore is bound to admit it; and were any church to deny it, such denial would justify the depar-

^{*} I cannot help mentioning here the following circumflance that passed in conversation with a person of high quality, well known for her religious character and zeal, and
who is of eminent rank in the mystical line. The conversation turned upon a subject relating to the New Birth,
which her Ladyship properly recommended to me as a
theme to preach upon. I answered, that I could not as
yet ensorce it from my own experience: To which she
replied; Preach it from the Scriptures, till you can preach
it from your heart. These words made an impression
upon my mind, which I have often occasion to remember, and may serve to explain the distinction here made
betwixt holding a Scripture truth doctrinally and experimentally.

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ture of every true believer from its communion as heretical and apostate. That our own does acknowledge and receive this doctrine, in particular appears both from her collects and articles; in the former of which, as appointed both for the Nativity and the Sunday following, is this Petition: " Grant that we being " regenerate and made thy children by adop-" tion and grace, may daily be renewed by " thy Holy Spirit through the same our Lord " Jesies Christ." And in her ninth Article, speaking of the corruption through Original Sin ingendered of the Offspring of Adam, the affirmeth; that "This infection of nature 66 doth remain, yea in them that are regene-" rated:" Now, I think that none will ferioufly hold, that this daily renovation by the Holy Spirit can mean Infant-Baptilm: Or that the regenerate, here spoken of, fignifics all baptized persons. I should think it lost time to contend with any such. But indeed every church deferving the name of Christian, does in her Creeds, Articles, Doctrine of the Sacraments, or under the terms Union, Spiritual Incorporation, Renovation, or words of like import, either more obscurely or more explicitely, express a belief in the doctrine of a New and Spiritual Birth; or as we fay in our Nicene Creed, In the Holy Ghoft, as the Lord and Giver of Life. I shall only add here, as a particular worthy to be noted, that in the dawn of the Reformation, among other articles of religion fet forth by authority [See Burnet's History of the Reformation is the following: 60 That

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"That Justification fignified Remission of Sins, "and a perfect Renovation of Nature in "Christ*." It is a pity that this was afterwards left out, without a proper substitute in its place: But the wifest compilers of articles have their degree and growth in light and grace as well as inferior persons.

* This article affigns the true foundation of that faith which justifieth, viz. the renewed nature in Christ by the operation of his Spirit; for a divine faith can only fpring from a divine root. There is a faith which is of man, and a faith which is of God; or a faith which has its birth from the fallen nature, and a faith which has its birth from the renewed nature: In the former is the false hope, the false affurance, and the false worship; but in the latter, the true; the former holds Christ in the history, and his doctrines in the letter of the Scriptures; but the latter pofselfes him in the mystery, and his doctrines in the spirit The former faith is no better than the faith of Cain who flew his brother, and was not accepted, for it is the fruit of the old Adam: In this faith men go to war with and perfecute their brethren for what they call the true religion, though in fact no better than Paganism; nor was Calv n any better than a persecuting Papist, or even Pagan, at the time that he flew Servetus with the fword of the Civil Magistrate: As he knew not the distinction between the new and the old nature, and the faith of each, to he mistook the Scriptures throughout in relation to the great doctrine of justifying faith; and this error joined to that horrible one of Reprobation, renders his fystem the Deformation and not the Reformation of Christian religion. I know and love fome excellent perfons that are in it, but they would be much more excellent if they were out of it; for I well know by experience how it straitens the heart, and like rust corrodes the vitals of charity, having been myself tied and bound with Calvin's galling chain in times past; but I praise the Lord for that he let me free by means of his fervants the Mystic Writers, and it is my prayer to God that he will deliver them

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It would be no difficult matter to fill a volume with quotations from the best Mystical Writers of our church on the subject of the New Birth; but one of them at this time will ferve my purpose, I mean the holy and judicious Bishop Taylor, who professedly handles this subject in his fecond Sermon on The Spirit of Grace, from the following text, Rom. viii, 9, 10. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you: Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, &c. This excellent Bishop, after describing the effluxes of the Holy Spirit upon us in his great channels (as he terms it,) and observing how we become animal or carnal men through our own evil paffions and the powers of darkness: " So on " the other fide (fays he) by the grace of "God, and the promise of the Father, and " the influences of the Holy Ghoft, our Souls " are not only recovered, but are heightened " into spirit, and transformed into a new na-" ture. St. Hierom tells us of the custom of the " Empire; that when a tyrant was overcome, " they used to break the head of his statues, " and upon the same trunk to set the head of " the conqueror, and fo it passed wholly for

" the new prince: So it is in the kingdom of

" grace: As foon as the tyrant Sin is over-" come, and a new heart is put into us, or

" that we serve under a new head, instantly " we have a new name given us, and we are

" esteemed a new creation, and not only

" changed in manners, but we have a new e: nature

" nature within us, even a third part of an "effential constitution *. This may seem "strange, and indeed it is so, for it is one of the great mysteries of the gospel. Every man naturally consists of soul and body, but every Christian man that belongs to Christ hath more, for he hath Body and Soul, and Spirit:

* This diffinction of the Bishop's (in which, as well as in many other things, he follows fome of the most excellent of the Mystic Writers) I do here recommend to the ferious attention of the Reader. It has had a weighty effect upon my mind, I trust for good, and may have the fame upon others. The common distinction of man into foul and body only, passes with the generality; and few think of any other constituent principle in him, though the Apostle adds to these two that of Spirit (Ilveuuc) as a third component principle: I Theff. v. 23. and in many other parts of his writings it is spoken of in distinction from the animal or natural Soul (Yuxn) Now the departure of this spiritual part or principle was the loss of the divine image in Adam through the Fall, but is again the gift of God promised and given to man in I sus Christ, by the New Birth, fignified in Scripture by the Seed and Life of Gid, New Name, New Song, White Stone, &c. and according to the doctrine of heavenly Physics, it is the water and light of life, the oil of gladness, and the redeeming blood of the Lamb. This divine principle may again be loft; and in this case, man is under wrath and perdition a fecond time, and as foon as he becomes deprived of the false animal comforts of this elementary life, he necessarily falls into the nature and misery of the infernal Spirits of darkness, (having no other light belonging to him than what is of this world) for the Soul being from an immortal root cannot wholly perish, but (whilft destitute of this principle of divine life, which is the image of God) it is the gnawing worm that dieth not, the anguishing fire-breath that is not quenched. I have been well informed of a person, who under a sense, or at least strong persuasion, of his having sinned away

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" Spirit: My text is plain for this: - If any " man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none " of his. By Spirit here is not meant only the " graces of God, and his gifts enabling us to " do holy things: There is more that belongs " to a good man than fo; for as when God " made man, he made him after his own " image, and breathed into him the Spirit " of life [lives] fo in the new creation " Christ conforms us to his image, and by " the Spirit of a new life we are made new " creatures: And this is called the Seed " of God, when it relates to the principle and " cause of this production, &c." In the same Sermon, towards the end, are these words: "A " spiritual man, a man that is in the state of " grace, who is born anew of the Spirit, that " is regenerate by the Spirit of Christ, he is " led by the Spirit, &c."

If this doctrine of the New Birth is thus

this divine form of his life, and of being reduced to a mere animal state, lived in perfect health and use of his natural understanding, but under the deepest distress: Whether still living I know not. Reader, beware how thou losest this heavenly treasure: Trust not to the succours of thy reason (and yet make the best of it thou canst) for salvation, for this is thy property only as an immortal animal; [See a Sermon intitled Animalis Homo by Dr. E. Reynolds, formerly Bishop of Norwich] but thy only help lyeth in the spiritual life, the source of which is in Jesus the Saviour. I close this Note with wishing, that the above mentioned two Sermons of Bishop Taylor were printed by themselves, and dispersed throughout the kingdom, as they might be of great use both to the salse Enthusiast and to the presumptuous Rationalist.

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venerable for its authority and high importance in the Christian life, it may well be expected that every one, more especially every one who lays claim to a spiritual character, should treat it with that ferious regard that is due to the dignity of the subject: And therefore it must needs give great offence, and has given great offence to many pious Christians, to see this doctrine introduced, not only with levity but ridicule, by the author of a late work intitled, The Doctrine of Grace, or the Office and Operations of the Hely Spirit vindicated, &c. And here it is hard to fay, whether he has more mocked his performance by the title, or the title by his performance, for that mockery runs through a great part of it, is visible to every reader; and mockery more ill placed than in the following instance cannot I think be exemplified from any other author. The Reverend Mr. Wesley does in several parts of his Journals lay down some marks of the New Birth which indeed appear, not only doubtful, but exceptionable; as particularly in certain cases where persons appeared agitated or convulled under a work of the ministry, and which might be owing to other causes, as terfor, remorfe of conscience, the powers of imagination, or fudden convictions, rather than to any regenerating work of God's Spirit: And yet, that supernatural impressions may be caufed on the body and senses by the same good Spirit under a work of found conversion, or previous to it, appears in particular from the instances of St. Paul and the trembling Jaylor:

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However, the author before mentioned, instead of endeavouring to rectify what he judged an error in Mr. Wesley on this subject, sets himfelf to ridicule a paffage in his Journal thereupon, as follows: "Since these symptoms " were universal and inseparable from the New " Birth, I rather think, and I will venture to " fay, as it is only raising the Catachresis one " step higher, that the Devil was only act-" ing the part of man-midwife to the New " Birth, p. 129." It seems here difficult to explain, how the figure Catachrefis, which fignifies the abuse of a word or expression, can justify the author's heightening that abuse on so facred a subject, whereby he becomes guilty of a double Catachresis, if ludere cum sacris & ludere cum profanis are allowed to come under that figure. We do not here directly charge him with denying the Scripture-doctrine of the New Birth, as he has not done so in express words; nor do we directly charge him with pointing his ridicule directly to the doctrine in front, but he stands, we think, justly charged with treating it in such a manner as gives occasion to think, that he not only disbelieves it but laughs at it; nor perhaps will the forbearing a formal denial of it pass with many for any thing better than a guarding of words to escape a formal charge; and lest he should be called upon to a defence, wherein all his wit and learning will stand him in little stead; however, there is a way of shewing one's meaning by one's manner, and fome may unluckily apply on this occasion the art of certain

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tain cunning men, who know how to transgress so cleverly, that the letter of the law shall not be able to take hold of them; and yet for all their cleverness people will know what to think of them. That the author has introduced the Devil here in a way highly reprehenfible, cannot be denied; and indeed the freedom he takes with that infernal Spirit in very many parts of his work, does not look well: To give only one more instance of this from p. 143, where he makes use of this expression; The same reverend Testimonies, the Devil and the Priest: Now to join together in one epithet two fuch contrary characters as facred and profane, is not only a folecism in language, but notoriously incongruous and indecent in religion; and the least that can be faid of the author on this occasion is, that he has made use of a wrong bow, and over-shot his mark; and yet were any one to take shelter under the authority of his example, and, affecting to be witty mal à propos, should here lay, that the Devil owed his Lordship a shame, and taking advantage of his passion for banter, had here paid him in full; this might be thought using great liberty with his Lordship; and yet it must be allowed less offensive to a Christian ear, to hear of the Devil having to do with the Bishop of Gloucester, than as introduced in a ludicrous mention of the New Birth as a Co-adjutor with — I leave it to his Lordthip's abler pen to fill up the fentence, for I must own, I cannot do it. Let it be observed here, that it may be dangerous even to jest Cc2

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jest with the Devil out of place, for he is a powerful prince in his own dominion; and though we may properly renounce and defy him in the fear of God and the faith of Christ, for then we stand upon safe ground, yet should he chance to catch any of his bufy mockers straggling in his own territory, as fuch are very apt to do, he well knows how to be even with them. It is not in one or two places only that the author acts his drollery in the mention he introduces of the New Birth; for to the best of my remembrance he never speaks of it throughout his work but jestingly; for the truth of which affertion, I refer the reader in particular to p. 124, 126, 143, 209. In the last of which pages he thus exercises the fame talent on the distinction between the New Man and the Old Man, where speaking of Mr. Wesley, he says: Invigorated by the New Birth he soon shakes off the Old Man's slough. One might reasonably have hoped that the authority of the Scriptures wherein this diffinction is made, and on which are founded the two important doctrines of man's fall and recovery (or rather they mean the fame) might have fecured it at least from such kind of mockery; but he whom the evil spirit of banter drives, knows not when nor where to stop. the author may think of Original Sin and our Restoration by Grace, according to the plain meaning of the articles of our church, I take not upon me to fay; but fure I think, that the following quotation of his Lordship's comparison carries with it no favourable appearance:

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ance: Mr. Wesley, in one of his Journals, speaks of two persons under the name of Enthusiasts, one of whom he calls a well meaning man: Now the author, who feeks all occafion of being witty in feafon or out of feafon, thus comments upon Mr. Wesley and his two Enthusiasts: " Though they are pronounced, " fays the author, original Enthusiasts alike, " yet we must understand their titles very dif-" ferently: The first Original was of his Ori-" ginal the Devil, a scatterer abroad of lies in " every quarter; the second was worth reco-" vering: His original Enthusiasm was a foun-" dation, like original fin, to erect upon it a " monument of grace, p. 224." Now whether this comparison of our author sounds more like a belief or a ridicule of the doctrine of Original Sin as ferving for a foundation whereon to build a monument of Grace, I leave the reader to judge, after declaring my firm belief in this article, from the authority of the Scriptures and of every true Christian church under heaven, as containing the fum and end of all that Christ has done and suffered, and is still doing for us. But there is no end of giving examples of the author's mockery and jefting with ferious things; this scoffing spirit breathes through his writings wherever he can find vent for it, and he feems only alive when in his element of banter: Nor can scriptural doctrines or phrases, however seriously applied by Mr. Wesley, escape his ridicule; and accordingly, he quotes more than a hundred Scripture expressions from Mr. Wesley's Journals,

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and marks them out to the reader to make merry with. I will not defend Mr. Wesley's injudicious and wrong applications of Scripture, of which there are many instances in his numerous Writings; but as he uses them all feriously and in the fear of God, God forbid! that I should ridicule him or any other man that does fo, however he may be chargeable at times with error in judgment. But lest Mr. Wesley should appear soberly religious in any part of his character, he will scarcely allow him to praise God for ordinary benefits, without charging him with superflitious belief in miracles: Thus where Mr. Welley speaks of a high wind ceasing just before his preaching to some thousands without doors, he adds, I praise God for this also; is it Enthusiasm to Jee God in every benefit we receive? The author upon this replies as follows: "It certainly is " not: The Enthusiasm consists in believing " those benefits to be miraculously conferred " through a change in the established course " of nature, p. 229." Now, if we are to allow of no change in the established course of nature by the interpolition of God's providence, then in vain has our church appointed prayers and thanksgivings for rain and fair weather; in vain a collect of thanksgiving to be used at sea for any wonderful Deliverance in a Tempest; in vain do we pray for the Recovery of the Sick: in a word, in vain do we pray to or praise God for any extraordinary mercies or bleffings; or rather, may it not be called a mockery, if he has to established the courte

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course of nature against himself, as to leave no room for any particular acts of his government in the way of dispensing mercies or judgments; unless we will also say, that the actions and behaviour of men both moral and religious are so established, that an established law in nature will fit them without any vari-But here the author replies upon us, that to suppose any departure from the settled course of things, is to believe in miracles. Let it be fo; I have no objection to the term, for I doubt not that many miracles of mercy are daily wrought by God's wonderful providence, even in favour of many that own them not; fo great is his patience and goodness to the unthankful and to the evil: And if in temporal things the Lord thus graciously manifests his great power, how much more are we to believe the same in spiritual things, nay are indispensibly required to believe it by a gospel faith; and therefore it is matter of astonishment and offence above measure, to see the author hanging out for derision many expressions in Scripture piously and properly applied by Mr. Wesley on these occasions. But may it not be asked here, if any thing can more tend to establish an Epicurean fatality amongst us, than to discountenance all belief in particular occasional interpositions of God's providence? Nay is it not to debase Christian faith, (under pretences of discouraging superstition) beneath the religion of Pagans, who believed that human affairs were subject to a divine government, and accordingly directed their Cc4 religious religious worship, though they so grossly erred in the object of it. But the manner in which the author treats the doctrine of the New Birth; that leffening way in which he speaks of the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit; and the high character he bestows on Reason with her fair and celestial Offspring natural religion and human learning, p. 288. affect more nearly the vitals of Christianity, and notwithstanding all the falvo's and concealments of art, give us sufficiently to understand on which fide his scale proponderates. The author of the Enthufiasm of Methodists and Papists compared, indulged a wanton pen in writing with great indecency upon the most serious subjects, under colour of exposing the errors of the Methodists, and so sacrificed a more honourable part of character to the reputation of being thought witty; but whatever fecret fatisfaction he might take in being known to be the author of it, he had however so much sense of shame as not to prefix his name to it: How far Dr. Warburton, the present Bishop of Gloucefter, has succeeded upon the same plan, and if, though not so wittily profane, he has not been more profanely witty upon the most serious of all subjects, the New Birth, I leave to the judgment of the publick. If it be faid, that he has not formally attacked the doctrine itself, but only (to use his own ludicrous expreffion) opposed the Freaks of what Mr. Wefley calls The New Birth: Let it be answered; If it is a Scripture-doctrine (and who will deny it?) as such it is facred and venerable,

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ble, nor nor will any mistakes of Mr. Wesley concerning it, justify its being treated with levity, much less with ridicule; besides, his Lordship was called upon by the nature of his subject, to divide betwixt truth and error, and fo to rescue it from any false representations of it by Mr. Wesley, which he has not done, nor once made any ferious mention of it that I know: Nay, he feems far from being in a proper difposition to convince Mr. Wesley of any of those errors he charges him with; for whilft he pretends charity, he loads him with railing accufations, and reproachful names, as Enthufiast, Fanatic, Hypocrite, Empyric, &c. unbecoming the character of a Christian or a Gentleman; and only introduces Mr. Whitefield, to reprefent him as the madder of the two. ever be the errors and faults of the Rev. Mr. Wesleys and of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield, they are not only ferious, but able ministers in the gospel, according to their different light and talents; have been abundant in labours, and turned many to righteousness through repentance and faith in Christ Jesus, and therefore deserve honourable mention instead of scurrilous treatment: I differ from them in some weighty points of doctrine relating to Predestination, Perfection, Justification and the New Birth; but this shall be no cause on my side, for angry or libellous disputes with them. I think myfelf obliged thus publickly to acknowledge that I have found in the Rev. Mr. Whitefield many unquestionable proofs of unaffected piety

and Christian love, and that I have formerly received benefit from his ministry; and yet I will not therefore defend him in any thing that appears to me contrary to found doctrine: But then, on the other hand, neither will I (Grace strengthning me) flinch from owning a truth, because Mr. Whitefield or Mr. Wesley teach it, or because they may err concerning it. When any vital part of religion is attacked through their fides, we are called upon to make a common cause of it with them against the common adversary, and not, through fear of a name or the fear of a shame, to give conscience cause to reproach us; and wherein they err concerning the truth, let us admonish them in the fpirit of meekness, and not load them with reproachful names and slanderous invectives; for it must be owned, that they have born an honourable testimony to Christ; and had they gone on to build up, as they laid the foundation, their adversaries would not have been able to stand before them; but here they failed, and fell into divisions, fierce disputings and errors in doctrine; and their uncharitable censurings of others have brought more than double upon themselves; and yet I lay not this to the charge of all the Methodists. What cause had Mr. 7. Wesley, among others, for that obloquy he pours on those excellent men, the Mystical Writers, who teach the way to Christian perfection on furer principles than he has yet done, and, I believe, attained to higher degrees of it. What is most excellent among the

the Methodists comes the nearest to what is laid down in their spiritual writings; and had Mr. Wesley studied them more himself, and brought his hearers acquainted with them, they might not have stopped so short as, in general, they have done, but have grown up into a higher stature of Christian life and divine knowledge. He has taken pains to represent in a reproachful manner the works of that wenderful man 7. Behmen, which he never understood; and, in particular, that incomparable book his Mysterium Magnum; but, if that be too hard for him, I do here offer him a lefton of Christian moderation taken from a plainer part of his Writings, viz. his fecond Letter to Caspar Lindern, as follows. " I judge none, and to " condemn any is an idle arrogancy and vain " prating: The Spirit of God himself judg-" eth all things, and, if that be in us, where-" fore should we use many words, and not " rather rejoice in the gifts of our brethren? " Doth any herb or flower say unto the other, " I will not stand by thee? And have they not " all one mother whence they grow? even fo, " all fouls proceed from one; why then do we " boast to be the children of God, whilst we " are more foolish than the herbs and flowers " of the field? Doth not God impart and " reveal his wisdom to us diversly, as he ma-" nifests the tincture of the mystery in the " earth through diverse fair plants? even so " it is in us men, who should love one an-" other the more for his revealing his wisdom " so variously in us; but he that judgeth and " contemneth

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" contemneth another in an evil way, only runneth on in pride to shew himself, and is

" the oppressor in Babel that stirreth up con-

" tention and strife."

I do declare from my heart, that it is in the spirit of brotherly love that I hold forth this admonition to Mr. Wesley, and would to God that all who have differences in judgment with one another, were possessed of the same temper of moderation that I find in myself at this writing; and yet I judge not even severity of reproof (where the occasion calls for it) if it comes from a godly zeal, and not from a mocking and malevolent spirit; for such mesfengers may stand under a peculiar character before the Lord, not only blameless but highly honourable in their office; for there are different administrations of the Spirit under the fame Lord; and therefore let none of the children of the kingdom be offended, when any one in the office of Ehas or John the Baptist appears amongst them, for the best, at times, have need of fuch a reprover. As to my own part, I hope, I have watched over my own spirit throughout this work with some degree of jealousy, and where I have transgreffed my proper bounds (as perhaps I may) shall be forry for it; and yet I think that I have not been without much felf-abasement and consciousness of my great defects and shortness in grace all along, more particularly where I have thought myself called upon to pass something of censure on characters very far above myfelf my tha ma mo tur of

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ove felf myself in the best things. It must be allowed, that in the spirit of meekness we generally make our way best and profit one another most, nay, in this disposition we may even turn our differences of opinion into an exercise of charity; whereas invective and ridicule will only ferve to banish the good spirit, of peace and love from our hearts, and to give the common enemy an occasion of triumph. glad of an opportunity to strengthen this observation with a quotation from a late Charge to his Clergy by our worthy Metropolitan, the prefent Arch-billiop of Canterbury, wherein, after much excellent advice to the Clergy, his Lordhip takes occasion to speak of the Methodists (for to them all must apply it) and after animadverting on fome irregularities and things blameable in them, proceeds to lay down the following cautions and rules against invective and ridicule, and for a proper behaviour towards them; and the same advice may be useful for the latter also.

"It would not only be injurious but pro"fane, to brand with an opprobrious name,
"Christians remarkably serious, merely for be"ing such; and equally imprudent to disclaim
"them as not belonging to us, to let a sect
gain the credit of them, and labour to
"drive them into it. Surely, we should take,
"even were they wavering, or actually gone
"from us, the most respectful and persuasive
"means of recalling such, and fixing them
"with us: Nay, supposing any persons irre"coverably

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" coverably gone, we should not be hasty to condemn, even in our thoughts, either them " or their party, as Enthusiasts or Hypocrites: " What soever they are, it maketh no matter to " us *: And much less ought we to say of " either worse than we are sure they deserve. "When we are undoubtedly well informed of " any extravagant things which they have af-" ferted or done, it may be useful to speak " strongly of them; not with anger and ex-" aggeration (which will only give them a " handle to censure our uncharitableness and " confute us) but with deep concern, that " when fo few persons express any zeal for "the Gospel, so many of those who do, " run into extremes that hurt its interests. " Nor will ridicule become our character or " ferve the cause of religion better than in-" vective: It may please those very highly " who are in no danger of being profelyted by " them: But what shall we get by that? Per-" fons negligent of religion will at the same " time be confirmed in their negligence, and " think that all they need to avoid is being " righteous overmuch +; tender minds will be " grieved and wounded by fuch ill-placed le-" vity; and crafty declaimers will rail at us " with success, as scoffers denying the power of " godliness : But if we let fall any light ex-" pressions, that can be wrested into a seeming " difrespect to any Scripture-doctrine or phrase, " we shall give our adversaries unspeakable

^{*} Gal. ii, 6. † Eccles. vii. 6. ‡ 2 Pet. iii. 3.

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" advantages; and they have shewn that they " will use them without mercy or equity: "Therefore we must guard every word that " we utter against misrepresentations; be sure " to express in publick and private our firm " belief of whatever evangelical truths border " upon their mistakes; and certainly be as " vigilant over our behaviour as our teaching; " encourage no violence, no rudeness towards " them; but recommend ourselves to them " by our mildness, our seriousness, our dili-" gence; honour those who are truly devout and virtuous amongst them, much more on " that account, than we blame them for being " injudicious and hard to please; and be full " as ready to acknowledge the good they have " done, as to complain of the harm; and yet "beware, and counsel others to beware of " being drawn by esteem of their piety, into " relishing their fingularities, and patronizing " their Schism."

It is natural to observe here, how amiable the Episcopal character appears in the display of such candour and Christian moderation; and how much better it would be for the peace of the church in all its parts, if all bishops were like minded. But to return to the Mystical Writers:

Now these are the Christians who do in a more especial manner assert and witness to the high dignity and saving influences of the Gospel; as it is a ministration of the Spirit, the more per-

fect

fect dispensation which was to succeed that of Christ after the flesh; and therefore our Lord told his Disciples that his departure was expedient for them: And accordingly, " when he " ascended up on high, and led captivity cap-"tive, he received gifts for men, that the " Lord God might dwell among them *" by his spiritual Presence: And the promise of this indwelling of the Spirit, was confirmed by our Lord to his Disciples, as we read John xiv. where he tells them that The Father would give them another Comforter, that should abide with them for ever, even the Spirit of Truth: Which first took effect in the way of a publick dispensation on the day of Pentecoste, and was to continue through all succeeding ages of the church. As the Spiritual or Mystical Writers do, with great cause, lay much stress upon this gracious promise and best gift of God to man, viz. his Holy Spirit to dwell in him, for illumination, fanctification, and all other purposes of the divine life; so it was natural for the Rev. Mr. Law (that eminent Mystic of our church) to find fault with that affertion of the Bishop of Gloucester's (then Dr. Warburton) That the constant abode and supreme illumination of the Holy Spirit is in the Sacred Scriptures of the New Testament; thereby removing the constant residence of this blessed Agent from the heart of man, which is his proper temple and abode +, to those written words of the Apostles which testify to his presence

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^{*} Pfal. lxviii. 18.

^{† 1} Cor. vi. 19.

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with us and in us. His Lordship observes no measure of moderation with Mr. Law for pointing out to him his error, but calls that great and good man Enthuhast, Fanatic, and one who had spent his life in devouring with an incredible appetite the trash dropt from every species of Myslicism *. Mr. Law is not living to return a proper and more decent answer; and therefore we must allow that his Lordship has here well followed the maxims of that worldly prudence which he fo highly extols in his writings; as it is certainly far fafer to cudgel a dead man than a living one: He calls him Poor Man, and pities his weakness, and so has found out a way to victory that costs him little pains; for if he has any occasion of triumph, it must be in this, and not in the reply he makes to Mr. Law's correcting pen, as I think will appear even by his Lordship's representation of the case: See pag. 39. However that be, his Lordship still perfifts in affirming, that our Saviour's promile of the Comforter's abiding with us for ever, is eminently fulfilled in our being possessed of the inspired Scriptures of the New Testament. The Reader is defired to observe here, that the point before us is no fuch matter of little consequence as the mere importance of a bare opinion, or speculative error, incautiously advanced, or ill defended, or resolvedly persisted in; but a subject of the highest concernment to the life and foul of Christianity; nothing

* Page 306.

less than Articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesiæ; and therefore it is turning a fundamental article of religion into a question for dispute; As whether the guidance, light and influences of the Holy Spirit within us, in order to falvation, are not as necessary now, and as much a promife to us, as in any foregoing age of the Christian church; or whether we are left only to the help of our natural reason, to make the best we can of the words of Scripture, and to look for no other illumination from the Spirit of truth. But indeed I am at a loss to fay, how little we have now to hope for, according to this author, either in the way of light, grace or comfort, from the good Spirit of God; fo does he, throughout this work, whittle away every good promise in Scripture with the shaving knife of his art critical, even almost to the reverfing of those words of our Saviour, " I will not leave you comfortless, I will come " to you." To give the following instance out of many: " A farther reason for the abate-" ment of the influences of the supporting " spirit of grace, is the peace and security of " the church. There was a time when the " powers of the world were combined together for its destruction: At such a period " nothing but superior aid from above could " fupport humanity in fustaining fo great a " conflict as that which the holy Martyrs en-" countered with joy and rapture, the horrors " of death in torment: But now the profes-

^{*} John xiv. 18.

se fion of Christian faith is attended with ease 'and honour; and the conviction which the "weight of human testimony and the con-'clusions of human reason afford us of its 's truth, are abundantly sufficient to support " us in our religious perseverance." Doctrine of Grace, &c. p. 114. What a deceitful requiem have we here founded from the trumpet of error, to charm finners afleep in the cradle of vain hope, that they may perish in a fatal fecurity! The Prophets, * and Christ the King of Prophets, have pronounced a Woe to them that are at ease in Zion; foretold tribulation and the cross as the lot of all God's children here, and declare the feeking that honour which cometh of man, to be an hindrance to true faith +; but now we are told, that the profession of the Christian faith is attended with ease and bonour. There is a great difference betwixt a bare profession and an actual possesfion of a true faith; and however certain profesfors, by the help of much worldly prudence, may know how to scuffle well for themselves in the present scramble of things, that they may live in ease and honour, enjoy a fat share in the good things of this life, and leave riches behind them; yet fure it is, that the far greater part of those that truly seek a better country, have ever been here as poor despised pilgrims. and afflicted fojourners; and where it has been otherwise with them, they have not failed of a cross sufficient to balance their worldly ad-

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* Amos vi. † John v. 44.

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vantages. Bishop Davenant was so fully posfessed of this persuasion, that it is told of him, that a little before his death, he bleffed God for his fatherly correction in a fit of fickness, having had doubts before in his mind, whether he was a true child of God, as the preceeding part of his life had been fo full of temporal mercies *. But is the outward peace and security of the church a good reason for the abatement of the influences of the supporting spirit of grace? If so, have we not cause to fear lest the Lord is angry with us, that he has thus taken away that which is better, and given us in the room of it that which is worse, as spiritual good things must be allowed more excellent than those that are temporal? But is this true in fact? And do the true members of Christ's mystical body, or spiritual church, enjoy that full peace and fecurity in the things of this world that his Lordship speaks of? This is denied as a general truth, by all perfons of experience in the spiritual life, and therefore perhaps we are to understand him as meaning by the word Church certain persons in the church, who by their Alliance with the State, have made a good bargain for themselves. I say not this from envy or grudging to any worthy ministers because of their largest share in earthly good things - May God bless it to the comfort of their hearts, and even bestow upon them a still fuller measure, with increase of grace to use them to his

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^{*} Neale's History of the Puritans, Vol. I. p. 735. glory!

glory! But when a person of authority in the church publickly teaches, that ease and honour, and fuch worldly benefits, are to be confidered as an equivalent, or in lieu of any of the influences of the supporting Spirit of Grace, and that we are to be content now with abatements in the latter for fuch advantages as the former; furely it is time to ask, if this is not bringing certain strange things to our ears; and to know what these things mean. we cannot allow of any fuch abatements in the promifed ministrations of the Spirit, fince the good Lord has, in mercy and free grace, made over fuch a grant to his poor unworthy fervants; and by this divine charter we claim it; for we should become still more unworthy of it, if we were so to despise the riches of his goodness as to be willing to part with the smallest portion of it; and if any man should go about to perfuade us to confent to it even in thought, though it were to gain the whole world, let him be accounted of as a Barabbas. Ecclefiaftical history does indeed too well inform us how much the church declined in spiritual gifts and graces, when honours and riches and the favour of princes flowed in upon it, by the ill use which Christians made of these things, and we are forward enough to put the church of Rome in mind of it, and of the times when her corruptions first commenced; and how she went on to play her harlotry with the kings of the earth, for her ease and honours, and peace and security: And shall we now say, that these things were Dd 3 given

given her in lieu of abatements in the influences of the Holy Spirit? Was the Lord's hand shortened, that he could not, or his goodness impaired that he would not communicate the fame full measure of grace to his church as before, and that at a time when she most needed it, to guard her against the seducements of the world and the Devil? Does it become us thus to charge God foolishly? Ought we not rather to lay the blame and the shame at the door it belongs to, by owning, that the love of the world in the Christians of those days, and their fins and iniquities, separated between them and their God; and as his Holy Spirit cannot dwell in the hearts of carnal and worldly minded men, fo it withdrew in grief and mourning, and fo would no longer strive in vain with fleshly men *; and fo it is more or less in every age and every church; and therefore let us not impudently lay the blame of our apostacy upon God, and endeavour to perfuade one another with fophistry and lies, that he giveth not now fo much grace to Christians as formerly, but with great abatements on account of their living in the fun-shine of an establishment, and so being able to do well enough with a smaller measure of it.

As the author of the foregoing passage sets aside the necessity of superior aid from above for our Christian warfare, during the present

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^{*} Gen. vi. 3.

peace and fecurity of the church, so he afferts that the conviction which the weight of human testimony and the conclusions of human reason afford us of the truth of Christian faith, are abundantly sufficient to support us in our religious perseverance. Here he rests the whole of our support upon human testimony and human reason; but I had rather give all advantage to his words than take any of them (for I declare that the present censure is grounded, not upon any particular expressions in his work, fo much as upon the tenor, purport and tendency of the whole of it.) Now as he had in the former part of this performance affirmed, that " The constant abode and " fupreme illumination of the Comforter is " in the facred Scriptures of the New Testa-" ment," we will therefore join these to his last words, and set his meaning thus: The fupreme illumination of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures of the New Testament, in conjunction with human testimony and the conclufions of human reason, are abundantly sufficient for our religious perseverance. As human testimony, I take for granted, here means the testimony of the church to the canonical authority of the Scriptures as transmitted down to us, this point will enter little into the queftion before us, as we are agreed on the authenticity of the received Scriptures; and therefore the matter lies betwixt the supreme illumination of the Spirit in the Scriptures, and unaffisted reason as the interpreter of those Scriptures being abundantly sufficient, &c. Now D d 4: waving

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waving the incongruity of the expression, of the Holy Spirit's refiding in the written word: Waving the absurdity of supposing the leffer light to judge of and comprehend the greater: And waving all the arguments that might be brought from the disagreement and controverfies of a thousand reasonable commentators, who by the light of this supreme illumination in the Scriptures have not yet been able to agree in one confistent interpretation of their meaning; whence so many different churches, and fects in every church have arifen: Waving these considerations for brevity sake; let us argue from what is confessed betwixt us, that we are infufficient of ourfelves for divine knowledge, without a revelation of divine truth; now the same Scriptures which teach us this, (and which the experience of our ignorance may teach us also) tell us, that we cannot comprehend supernatural truths but by a supernatural light, and even a modeft reason will consent to this axiom; for if the mind of man is in darkness with respect to spiritual things, through the fall, then his reason, as a faculty of the mind, must consequently be so far in darkness too, and therefore can no more inveltigate, comprehend and convey spiritual truths from the Scriptures to the mind than the understanding of a brute animal can comprehend the ideas of a man, because divine or spiritual things can only be known by a capacity proportioned to the nature of them; and therefore to talk of a supreme illumination in the Scriptures, which man has no capacity to receive,

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ceive, is like holding up a light to the blind. The strength of this argument is supported by the authority of an Apostle, who reasons thus: " What man [or who] knoweth the things " of a man fave the Spirit of a man who is " in him? Even so the things of God know-" eth no man, but the Spirit of God *:" Whence this conclusion is inferred; that as the divine Spirit can only know divine things, fo it can only be by union of our spirit with the divine Spirit that we attain to divine know-The natural fallen man may be a very acute critic in the words and fentences of Scripture; understand their grammatical structure and meaning, and also the moral precepts contained therein, together with the history of the Bible, its geography, chronology, &c. for these things and many more lye within the compass of his natural powers; and yet whilst he continues a natural unenlightened man, he will remain as blind as a mole, with regard to any spiritual truth throughout the Bible. Let us, for illustration sake, instance in those words of the Evangelist, where it is said of Christ, that "as many as received him, to them gave " he power to become the Sons of God —— " which were born, not of blood, nor of " the will of the flesh, nor of the will of " man, but of God +." Now, what would the mere natural man with all his wifdom and words do with this portion of Scripture? Why, after fitting down to it with his pompous apparatus of learned Lexicographers,

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^{* 1} Cor. ii. 11. + John i.

Commentators and Critics, and furnished with much admired skill in languages, philology and grammar, he would turn and twift and diffect the words various ways according to art, and make nothing of them; and after having passed them through all the chymistry of criticism, would pronounce, that, according to the letter, they were no better than nonsense, or a mere Catachresis, and not to be justified by the authority of any heathen author whatever; and so would set himself to explain them ingeniously away to some far distant meaning; or to no meaning at all; or, if profane enough, to turn them into banter: And vet no better than this is the wisdom contained in a waggon-load of our profoundly learned critics on the Scriptures; and what now shall we fay is the supreme illumination in the Scrptures to fuch? What else but a light shining in a dark place, of which it may be affirmed, that their darkness comprehendeth it not: And of such it is, that the fagacious Dr. Henry More speaks as follows *: " From the carnal man are hid " all the mysteries of regeneration: That New "Birth is a New Song + that he can never " learn before he be truly regenerate, let him " lay about him as foutly as he will with all " his unsanctified reason." Let us hear now what the great Apostle of the Gentiles savs as touching this matter; he who fo well knew wnat reason and human learning could do, and what they could not do; where he speaks to

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^{*} Div. Dial. iv. p. 123. + Rev. xiv. 3.

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the Jews who had the Scriptures of the Old Testament, but knew them not: And why? Because the vail was upon their heart *: They were in their state of natural darkness; and therefore the light of the Scriptures was no light to them, being in no disposition to receive it. What then were they to do? To go to human testimony and to human reason? Alas! these could not profit them, nor take away the vail: No, they were to turn to the Lord, and then the vail should be taken away; for, fays he, The Lord is that Spirit [that enlightneth or taketh away the vail] and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But is there not the fame vail now before the carnal heart that reads the Scriptures of the New Testament? There is, till such a one turn unto the Lord, that he may receive the Spirit which is of God, to know the things that are freely given to us of God: And thus only can we become " able ministers of the New Testament, " not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the let-" ter killeth, but the spirit giveth life +." But the same Apostle still goes farther, and speaks of what must hold true of the writings of the New, as well as of the Old Testament. "The " natural man receiveth not the things of the " Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto " him, neither can he know them, because " they are spiritually discerned ‡." Here he declares not only an incapacity in the natural

^{* 1} Cor. ii. † 2 Cor. iii. 6. ‡ 1 Cor. ii.

man * to understand divine or spiritual things, but also a contrariety in his fallen nature to them, infomuch that they are an offence to him: And we well know that it is fo, by full experience of that mocking and deriding spirit which shews itself in many against the very mention of the privileges and spiritual ministrations of the Gospel. The same Apostle tells us in the same chapter, that The Spirit fearcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God, i. e. the Spirit of God in man; for, fays he, He that is Spiritual judgeth all things, yet he bimself is judged of no man. Now the diftinction of capacity and incapacity for receiving and understanding spiritual things, here laid down by the Apostle, is founded in a specifick difference of nature, and is eafily intelligible by all: Thus the animals that are void of reason, have no capacity beyond the things of animal nature; whereas rational creatures, as men, are capable of great intellectual knowledge, and of extending their scientifical purfuits to the limits of this created system; and by metaphyfical deductions to infer a first cause of all things, and also many things concerning relative duties and moral obligations; but then the things of the spirit of God, being of another kingdom and a higher nature, thefe

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^{*}It is here to be noted that the original words Yuxinos suffgun here translated natural man, fignify even the most perfect man in his natural state; and may be render'd more closely Soulish or animal man, i. e. man consisting of soul and body, but void of the Spirit of God, by which alone he can know the things of God. Much stress is to be haid on this distinction, as has been observed before.

they cannot know unless united to his Divine Spirit, and then they may according to their measure: And in this consists the excellence of man's nature, tho' fallen, that, thro' mercy and the Mediator, he is still capable of this union, and fo, not only of knowing spiritual things, but also of a spiritual fruition of the divine beatitudes. Man's natural inability for divine knowledge without the communication of fuch spiritual power is thus express'd by the Wiseman *: " The things that are in heaven " who hath fearched out? And thy counsel who "hath known, except thou give wisdom, and "fend thy Holy Spirit from above?" This is that wisdom, of which the most exalted things are spoken in Scripture; and which the Author of The Doctrine of Grace, &c. defines to be the great principles of Natural Religion, p. 24. Sure, never was the Divine Sophia so degraded before: But indeed he seems highly paradoxical in all his definitions, as well as strangely out of the way in most of his fentiments concerning Religion, or we should never have heard of right opinion being at least a fu'l third part of Christian Religion, p. 158. and this paradox supported by the following words of St. Paul: The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteougness and truth: + But as I am no proficient in the art of proving Quidlibet ex quolibet, I leave it to the ingenious reader to judge how far the Author has yet profited by that supreme illumination which he places in the Scriptures.

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^{*} Wifd. ix. + Epef. v. g.

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Nothing is here faid to detract from any right and good use or benefit that may accrue from human testimony and human reason: They have their provinces, and proper degrees of evidence, to be admitted and not lightly to be spoken of in their due place; but when they are set up as abundantly sufficient to support us in our religious perseverance, we are call'd upon to shew, that no such power belongs to them, and that from clear testimony of Scripture, which declares, that nothing less than a divine principle within us, as the gift of God, can do thus much for us. My grace is sufficient for thee *, was the voice of the Lord to Paul, to comfort and support him in his trials, which grace the Apostle in the same verse calls the Power of Christ resting upon him: And our fufficiency is, and can be no other than his was; for "by grace are we faved thro' faith, and that not of ourfelves, it is the gift of God +." Our sufficiency therefore is of God 1; not as he is the God of nature and the God of reason, but as he is the God of Grace, "working in us to will and to do of his good pleafure," by his fupernatural power, and by his Spirit of truth and consolation in our hearts, according to his promise, and strengthening us with might by his Spirit in the inner man §; that being thus "ftrengthen'd with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, we may be filled with the knowledge of his will,

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^{* 2} Cor. xii. + Ephel. ii. 8. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 5. § Ephel. i. 16. in

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in all wisdom and spiritual understanding *." And from this Spirit of wisdom and power within us proceeds the true divine faith, ever to be diffinguish'd carefully from that faith which springs from no higher birth than human testimony and human reason; for these can only beget a human faith, and a moral certainty, which are not sufficient for our support and perseverance in godliness, nor have they power to produce any godly motion in the foul; whereas the spirit of life in the New Birth begets in us a divine faith, which has in it a divine affurance known only of them that have it: And this divine faith always worketh by divine love; and divine love by obedience to the divine commands. This faith of divine original is the Christian's strong shield, to defend him against all the affaults of his enemies; it purifies the heart, enables him to overcome the world, and is mighty thro' God, to pull down all the strong holds of fin and Satan, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ +, and so is abundantly fufficient to support us in our religious performance. This is the true supreme illumination of the Holy Spirit, hid indeed to them whose minds the God of this world hath blinded, but shining unto them who are the heirs of Salvation (and ready to shine to all) as the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God ‡. In this illumination of the Holy Spirit within us even reason

^{*} Col. i. + 2 Cor. x. 2 Cor. iv. 4.

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itself becomes enlightened, and so is properly call'd right or illuminated reason, and constitutes what is called in Scripture the found mind *: And here the right understanding is open'd within us that understandeth the Scriptures; the spiritual man, according to his meafure of light in the New Birth, fearthing out the deep things of God contained therein. We must therefore, I say, be every careful to distinguish between the two Births, that which is from nature, and that which is from grace; that which is from beneath, and that which is from above; that which is after the flesh, and that which is after the Spirit; for thefe are contrary the one to the other; and according to this distinction, so is the faith, the knowledge, the ruling principle, the wisdom, and the worship of the man, and by their fruits they are known; for as is the earthly, such are they that are earthly, and as is the heavenly, fuch are they also, that are heavenly. But herethe following question may be ask'd, viz. If we can only rightly know the Scriptures by the internal illumination of the Spirit of truth, what use then are they of; seeing the spiritual man does not need them, and the natural man is no better for them? To which it is answer'd, that they are of great use to both every way, and highly to be esteem'd and reverenc'd as a most precious gift of God to man, being profitable to all for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness. And first; They are highly beneficial to the spiri-

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tual man, as they serve both for a test and confirmation (even to his rational powers) of whatever spiritual truths may be convey'd to him by any other way, whilst the outward witness and the Spirit of truth bear testimony, and answer to each other as face answereth to face in a glass; and so by the evidence of two unerring witnesses, all things are establish'd in thus comparing spiritual things with spiritual. Secondly; They fet before him things past, present and to come, to the manifestation of God's wonders, wisdom and goodness in the ways of creation, providence and redemption. Thirdly; They explain to him God's dealings with his children in this world; and bring him acquainted with the experiences of the Saints; and so both give him light as to his own state, and also hold forth many useful lessons for example, patience, direction and comfort. Fourthly; They give him a Pifgah fight of the heavenly Canaan, which is his true country and purchased possession; and so comfort him under his short affliction thro' this valley of tears, with many precious promifes of that happy time, when he believes verily to fee the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. And lastly; They are of great use to enable him to expound unto his brethren the way of the Lord more perfectly, as from an allow'd authority; and also, by rightly dividing the word of truth, to put to filence the ignorance of fuch foolish men as put darkness for light, and light for darkness. Again, the Scriptures are of great use even to the natural Ec

man, as they contain milk for babes as well as meat for the strong; and instruct in the rudiments or first principles of Religion those who are not as yet ripe for the mysteries of the kingdom; thus speaking in a language that may be known of all; and so may be compared to the waters in Ezekiel * that flow'd from the altar, which at first were only up to the ancles, but afterwards waters to swim in. Secondly, they contain much excellent moral instruction; many exhortations to piety, and dehortations from fin, together with fundry remarkable examples of the divine vengeance on notorious offenders. Thirdly, they bring him acquainted with his horrid fall and apoftacy from God; fet before him the divine law, to direct his obedience, to convince him of fin, and fo to point out the necessity of his redemption, as figur'd throughout the ceremonial part of the law; shewing how the divine mercy, concurring with the love of Christ for fallen man, carried on this wonderful œconomy of the divine goodness thro' various ways down to the atoning facrifice of the Lamb of God on mount Golgotha-Thus the Scriptures ferve all the way, both for a rule of life and doctrine. And lastly, As a new dispensation took place at Pentecost, to be conducted thro' all fucceeding ages of the church by the administration of the Holy Ghost; so here the Scriptures direct us to Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life, that by the office and operations

^{*} Ezek. xlvii.

of his Spirit within us, he may enlighten, comfort, fanctify and regenerate us, and so turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God: Thus the facred writings do their appointed friendly office by sending us to him who gave the truth of the Scriptures, and is above all Scriptures, that so we may become the Epistles of Christ, written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God *.

As the author of The Doctrine of Grace, &c. p. 100, does deny all supernatural knowledge now in the church; fo the very sparing allowances he makes for the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit, amounting to little or nothing, do represent the church of Christ, now fince the times of the Apostles, in a most deplorable condition, whilst he refers us only to the Scriptures, as interpreted by human learning, and not at all to that quickning spirit that giveth light and life. A like dangerous and detestable error did particularly infect the United Provinces in the last century, and is judiciously censured by the pen of the celebrated Mrs. A. Schurman, not less eminent for her skill in divinity and her piety of life, than for her knowledge of arts and sciences, and languages both ancient and modern: And therefore I shall content myself with giving the reader the following refutation of fuch fort of doctrine by the hand of that excellent woman in her Latin Treatife in-

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^{* 2} Cor. iii. 3.

titled EYKAHPIA, of which I shall here give a faithful abridgment from p. 78 to p. 81. After proving from proper Scriptures that the gift of a new spirit within us, giving strength for true obedience, is the great promise of the New Covenant, she introduces mention of the apostle Peter as answering the mockers at the Pentecostal miracle, and appealing to the prophecy of foel ch. ii. as then begun to take place in the apostles; and telling them, that the promise of the same Spirit was equally made to them and to their children, and to all that were afar off, and was confirmed by our Saviour, John vii. 39. "Wherefore, fays she, " they stand convicted of error and perversion, " who have the affurance to confine this pro-" mise of the New Covenant to the infant. " state of the church, and say, that the Spirit of " truth was only given to the apostles to im-" part infallibility to their writings: Now the " Apostie, Rom. viii. 14. decides this question, where he tells us, that As many as are led " by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of "God; unless they chuse to say, that the " Christians of the present times have no need " of this divine guide: But he goes still farther, and declares, that If any man have not " the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his: Nor " let any one fancy, as fome in these days " hold, that the inspired writings of the apostles " and evangelists are as sufficient for our di-" rection and perfection as the inspired writ-" ings of the Old Testament were for the " Jews; feeing we deny, upon the authority " of those very Scriptures, that they were " thus sufficient for any Jew who did not " read and receive them by a divine light * " and the internal illumination of the Holy " Spirit. Upon the same authority we affirm. " that neither are the inspired writings which " we now posses, sufficient of themselves " to answer all the purposes of the Divine " Life, even in the regenerate, without the " constant guidance and operation of the same " Spirit, feeing that all the acts and functions " of the supernatural life, all its fruits of faith " and charity, must as much depend upon " the vital influence and energy of the same " Divine Agent, in their continuance and pro-" gress, as in their first production: And for " the ground of this truth we have that pro-" mise of Christ, John xiv. I will pray the " Father, and be Shall give you another Com-" forter, that he may abide with you for ever, " even the Spirit of truth, whom the world " cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nei-" ther knoweth him; but ye know him, for he " dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. Now " if any one is for restraining the extent of " this promise to the apostles, then he must " at the same time maintain, that they only " stood in need of this promised Comforter; " that they only could call Jesus Lord +; and " that they only were the Temple of the Holy " Ghost : Whereas the same apostle af-" firms, that he and the Christians of that time

^{*} Psal. xxxvi. 9. + 1 Cor. xii. 3, ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 19. Ec 3 *-had

" had only received the first-fruits of the Spirit", " evidently implying, that the harvest or full-" ness was to succeed. If it should be urged here; that we see not in our times any such " plentiful effusions of grace and the Holy "Spirit; I have only to reply, that the time for this bleffedness and glory of the Spouse of Christ is not yet come; but that we now " live as in the days of Noah, in a world im-" merfed in pleasures and felf-will, shortly to 66 be deluged by those judgments which our "Saviour has prophetically described, at which "time (of his second Advent to restore all st things) he hath declared that he shall not " find faith in the earth [in the generality of " mankind. I have to add here more parti-" cularly; that as our contempt of the most " facred truths of the gospel, and our grieving of the Holy Spirit, have deservedly in-" troduced among us a strong delusion; so the " general difregard to true and folid piety (of " which scarcely the appearance is left) is suf-" ficient to provoke God totally to withdraw " his Holy Spirit from us; especially at a time " when scarce any of our Teachers preach " up the necessity of the grace and guidance of "God's Spirit to the people faithfully as they " ought to do: Nor are we without a clear " proof of their lukewarmness as to this " fubject in the following instance, viz. That on none of these doctors (who are so ready to take " the alarm in other errors that are broached)

^{*} Rom. viii. 23. See also James i. 18.

" have shewed zeal enough for the glory of

"God, to answer a certain pernicious Book

" lately published, wherein the honour of the Holy Spirit is injuriously treated; and the

" province of interpreting the facred Scriptures

" profanely affigned to philosophy and human

" reason *."

I leave it to the reader to judge how well this excellent Author, from a clear knowledge of Scriptures judiciously applied, has furnished us with an answer to what his Lordship has advanced on the other side of the question; and in the compass of a few sentences swept away as a cobweb all his learned length of lost labour. It is natural to observe, that where any one is master of a truth and of the authority on which it rests; such an advocate proceeds in its defence, like one directing his steps to a fair object in full view, on a straight and level road; whereas he who aims for a pillar of smoke at a distance, without knowing any thing of his ground, is forced to make many

^{*} The Author's words in the Latin are as follows: Cujus minime obscurum argumentum nobis etiam præbuere Doctores (alias in resutandis erroribus vigilantissimi) quando
Scripto quodam pernicioso, atque in Spiritum Sanctum injurieso, philosophiæ ac rationi humanæ imperium in explicanda S.
Scriptura prosane deserebatur; quod nemo inquam eorum, cum
vero zelo gloriæ Dei arma contra illud sumere aggressus set.
p. 81. What particular book Mrs. Schurman here alludes
to is not mentioned; but we may suppose it to be one
written prosessed against the Office and Operations of the
Holy Spirit; or else some pretended desence on this subject,
no less injurious to the dignity of it.

turnings and windings, and if he does not lose his mark, yet ten to one is bewildered or bemired by the way.

The capital error which feems to have mifled his Lordship all the way on this subject, and from which therefore we may account for his deviations, presents itself to us in p. 336. of his work, in the following observable passage: " If Jesus did indeed redeem mankind, and " restore them to their lost inheritance; the " scheme and progress of revelation is com-" pleted, which beginning at the lapfe, na-" turally and necessarily ends in the restora-"tion and recovery of life and immortality by the death and passion of our Lord. Chris-" tianity confidered in this view (and in this " view only does Scripture give it us to confider) " foon detects all the artful pretences of im-" posture, and secures its own honour by vir-" tue of its very effence: The great scene of " providence being now closed in a full com-" pletion of its one regular, entire and eternal purpose." Indeed I believe, that there is not an Antinomian in the kingdom that would not be glad to see the doctrine of Crispe, Eaton and Saltmarsh revived according to this reprefentation of the gospel. True it is, that the ever bleffed Jesus did finish the work which his Father had given him to do in a body of flesh, when he gave up the ghost; for he had been the true and faithful witness for God and against fin; had preached the gospel of the kingdom; fulfilled all righteopiness in his own

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person; offered himself up a sacrifice for the fins of the whole world; and being justified in Spirit was received up into glory. But had the great Captain of our falvation no farther work to do for us? Yes, he had, and fuch a work as left undone, would have rendered useless all that had been done before; for till he was glorified, the Spirit was not given in the way of a publick dispensation, nor had the Gospel yet assumed its proper name as a ministration of the Spirit; and therefore the same Christ who was before revealed outwardly in a body of flesh, must needs be revealed inwardly in spirit, as the author of a new life and nature, which is that promised New Covenant, in which is the New Birth of a New Spirit, or the law of the Spirit of life, hereby redeeming us from the law of fin and of death, and giving us power to become the Sons of God: And therefore if we stop at the cross, at the price paid down, without going on to the purchased possession, to the renewed image of the divine nature, we attain not to the inheritance of fons; for as it is by the spirit of adoption that we are enabled to cry, Abba, i. e. Father, fo this alone makes us meet to partake in the inheritance of the faints in light. As therefore we honour Christ after the flesh in the history, so let us beware how we withhold the honour due to him in spirit after the mystery, for here he is the Prince of Peace, and King of Saints, and Lord of Glory: And as he is our spiritual Head, so must we be also his spiritual members, thro' a likeness and congruity

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gruity of nature, in order to our true fellowship with him, for so only can we properly call Jefus Lord, and be his subjects in that kingdom which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost: And therefore, as we honour the Father and the Son, fo must we in like manner honour the Holy Ghost, as thro' him we have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and without whom we can have no vital communication with the Godhead, for he is the light and life of God in the foul of man, and sheddeth abroad his love in our hearts: It is from him that all our good thoughts, defires and counsels do proceed; and from his divine influence that we alone pray to and praise God acceptably; and he is the Spirit of truth and comfort, of joy and peace in our fouls, for he receiveth the things that be of Christ, and dispenseth them to us: He is with us in all our forrows and trials, all the conflicts and exercises of our Christian warfare, so long as we continue faithful to his government of us; neither doth he ever wholly leave us or forfake us, but thro' our own fault, and then with grief, for he is a loving ipirit, and delighteth to dwell with men, that we may be his temple, and the habitation of God thro' him: And therefore to deny the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit in our hearts, producing there the divine graces of faith, hope and charity, is a subversion of the gospel of Christ, and to deny the truth of the Scriptures, instead of doing honour to them; nay, it is going about to rob man of his only true comfort

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comfort and highest honour in God, for such honour have all his faints, nor can any be faints but by a participation of these bleffed privileges. The Son of God did take to himfelf a human foul, to bless it with these communications and privileges in a degree of fuperlative eminence, and therefore the human foul is capable of them. This human foul in our bleffed Saviour was anointed with the Divinity, and fo called Christ (which fignifies anointed) and so be became the first-born among many brethren, a kind of first-fruits of his creatures, to be anointed again by him with an unction from the Holy one: And therefore, fays our Lord, John xvii. 22. The glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. And this gift was made over to his disciples, when they received the Holy Ghoft, and so became, under Christ, the first-fruits of many other brethren. whom they should beget thro' the gospel, I Cor. iv. 15. to be spiritual fathers to others. and fo on to the 144000 * among all the tribes of Ifrael, and to an innumerable multitude of all nations +: To which those words of our Saviour have respect, John xvii. 20. Neither pray I for them alone, but for them also which hall believe on me thro' their word.

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^{*} Rev. vii.

[†] See Reverend Mr. Richard Clarke's Glad T.dings in the Explanation of the First-born and First fruits, lately published, and fold by J. Townsend in London-Street, Mark-Lane.

To fay then, that " the scheme and pro-" gress of Revelation was completed by the " death and passion of our Lord; and to call " it the Great Scene of Providence, which then " received its full completion; and that the " Scriptures give us to confider it in no other " view than this:" If these expressions are now intelligible, and not to be fashioned into a better meaning by an after stroke of explication; then the whole scheme of Revelation was completed, before the Scriptures of the New Testament were given; and the lost inheritance was restored, before the Holy Ghost was given, and man made fit to enter upon it. May it not then be asked, if these affirmations do not exclude Christ from all part in conducting and finishing the great work of man's falvation, by the office and administration of his Spirit? And is it not to deprive the Holy Ghost of his share in the gospel dispensation; feeing it is he alone that gives complete efficacy to all Christ did and suffered in the days And therefore, tho' the reconciof his flesh. liation was made by the blood of the cross, as far as the outward atonement reached, yet the new creation was to be effected by the Spirit: and therefore the apostle Paul, who was called to be an apostle of Christ in the gospel, after the atonement of reconciliation speaks of the bleffed Saviour, as conducting the work of man's falvation in a higher character and capacity than in the days of his flesh; for, says he, "tho' we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more (no (no fore ture Hold hold Chi

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(no longer in that office and character:) Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (a regenerated man by the power of the Holy Ghost) old things are passed away; behold all things are become new *." Here Christ reconciling, and Christ regenerating us, is the same Lord conducting the great work of man's falvation, in both its highly important branches, by his death, and by his rifing again, to be a life-giving, quickning spirit; according to those other words of the same apostle; "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God thro' the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be faved by his life +." As if he had faid; If the death of Christ was of sufficient efficacy to slay the enmity, and to bring us into a capacity of becoming fons of God; how much more is the divine life of a risen Christ sufficient for our complete salvation, seeing now through bimwe have access by one Spirit unto the Father !. Now where a work confifts of different parts, we cannot fay that it is completed, till it is made perfect in all its parts; and therefore, tho' the holy Fesus had died a hundred deaths on the cross for poor finners, this could not have avail'd to their salvation, without the "fealing of the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession §." Which means the same with those words of St. Peter, Ep. i. ch. i. of our being born again, not of corruptible

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^{* 2} Cor. v. † Rom. v. 10. ‡ Ephef. ii. 18. § Eph. i. 14.

feed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever: This, fays he, is the word, which by the gospel is preached unto you: Where we see the New Birth made the fum and fubstance of that falvation which the gospel holds forth. It is herein that Christ is the fecond Adam * and our very true Father, begetting us again from his immortal feed and heavenly blood; and by his own quickning spirit making us alive from the dead: It it thus, that he is the fountain and fource of a holy offspring, even many fons and daughters appointed to glory: We are begotten again to this lively hope, by the resurrection of Jefus Christ from the dead, 1 Pet. i. 3. And therefore all was not completed by the death and passion of our Lord, as the author supposeth, but to be completed by the work of a risen Christ, thro' the operation of his Spirit: And this operation must continue so long as there remains one foul to be faved, for the economy of Gospel-salvation is never ended till then: And accordingly the Lord Fesus Christ is still working hitherto for us, and that more effectually by his life than by his death, as to make us fons is a higher work than to flay enmity. By the blood of his cross he obtained the right and paid the purchase; but is now making it over to them that shall be heirs of falvation, and forming them anew by his Spirit to a meetness for it +.

^{* 1} Cor. xv. 45.

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We bless the prophet of the Lord,
That comes with truth and grace;
Jesus, thy Spirit, and thy word,
Shall lead us in thy ways.

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II.

We rev'rence our High Priest above, Who offer'd up his blood, And lives to carry on his love By pleading with our God.

T.

Eternal Spirit we confess,
And sing the wonders of thy grace;
Thy pow'r conveys our blessings down
From God the Father and the Son.

II

Enlighten'd by thine heavenly ray, Our shades and darkness turn to day; Thy inward teachings make us know Our danger and our refuge too.

III.

Thy pow'r, and glory works within, And breaks the chains of reigning fin, Doth our imperious lufts fubdue, And forms our wretched hearts anew.

Hymns, &cc. by Dr. Watts.
I think

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I think it does sufficiently appear from the authority of the facred Scriptures, that Mr. Law had just cause to animadvert on his Lordship's doctrine of substituting the written word, as interpreted by dry unenlightened reason, in the room of the illumination and operations of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man, and fo tending to lessen our faith in the precious promises and privileges of the gospel, and to undermine the spirituality of the Christian religion. His Lordship in return does with exceeding acrimony endeavour to render Mr. Law hateful, by charging him with holding the detestable doctrine of Spinoza and the Materialists, and setting Nature in the Throne of God *. But herein he does great injustice to Mr. Law, whose hypothesis amounts to no more than this; That nature in its original perfect state and cælestial forms, was an efflux or emanation from fome property, form or idea in the Divine Nature: But he no more supposes that nature in its present degraded state (first by the fall of angels, and afterwards thro' the fall of man) did derive its groffness, darkness and hard compaction from the divine nature, than he supposes wicked men to derive their darkness and wrathful effence from it; and yet that the spirit of man did first come forth from God, is taught in Scripture +. Such as are unacquainted with the principles of the Teutonic Theosopher +, and have set their ideas by that fystem of philosophy which is commonly

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^{*} Decirine of Grace, &c. p. 155. + Gen. i. 26. ii. 7. Eccles. xii. 7. ‡ Jacob Behmen.

received amongst us, cannot enter into the diftinction between the materiality of nature in her present state of degradation, bondage and corruption, and as it is conditioned in the angelical world, where the lucid material vehicle of a Seraph may as far transcend in splendor and tenuity, the nature of our light in this world, as the latter does the darkness and denfity of a flint stone; hay, for what we know the difference may be inconceivably greater. Hence it is, that our definition of matter as to its effential properties, has nothing to do with the heavenly materiality: To instance only in the property of folidity: How is this compatible with the body of an angel, which can pass thro' a quarry of the hardest marble as easily as thro' the yielding air? And if even our prefent ideas of matter extend to a supposed pure æther, too fubtle to be the object of sense; what unaffignable gradations may belong to it in the highest heavens? Nay, what stretch of our understanding or imagination shall fix its bounds, and fay, Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther? Who can pronounce it incapable of fenfibility? Nay, who will say, that in its farther afcent of fublimation towards its first cause. it does not rife up to intellectuality? Or that the difference betwixt created spirit and created matter, in its nearest approach to the throne of God, is not rather specific than generical? Nay, to give the highest spring to hypothesis, who can positively deny, that it derives its first and purest effence from the arbitrary ideas conceived in the womb of the divine imagina-Ff

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tion, and by the Almighty fiat substantiated into created forms? No one has a right positively to deny this; and his Lordship cannot but know, that fome celebrated Metaphyfical authors have spoken sublime things, without censure, upon seeing all things in God, and of all things first subfisting in their prototypes in the divine ideas, without being accused of Spinozism: And therefore the charge he brings against Mr. Law, has the appearance of taking advantage of the general prevailing prejudice in favour of an erroneous philosophy, in order to bring upon him the scandal of an Hylist, tho' this character more properly belongs to his Lordship's system; for if the former may be faid to raise his notions of materiality too high; the latter does evidently fink spirituality in religion too low, if not wholly take it away. But for a more particular vindication of Mr. Law, I refer the reader to a judicious defence of him against the Bishop of Gloucester, by Mr. J. Payne, as I am more concern'd here for Mr. Law as a Mystic Writer, than as a speculative philosopher; and it is against this part of his character that his Lordship chiefly levels his artillery, or, I may rather fay, his small shot; and not only against him, but the whole class of Mystic Writers, particularly in p. 306, in the following words: When I reflect on the wonderful infatuation

" of this ingenious man, who has spent a long

[&]quot; life in hunting after, and with an incredible appetite, devouring the trash dropt from

every species of Mysticism, it puts me in

mind of what travellers tell us of a horrid fanaticism in the East, where the devotee " makes a folemn vow, never to taste any " food but what has passed thro' the entrails " of some impure or savage animal, &c." Here the author compares the writings of those excellent persons to the excrements of unclean beafts; and in the name of all true Mystics, dead and living, I here publickly declare, that the filth of the comparison returns to the proper source it came from, as it in no wife belongs to them; for they are the beloved of God, cleansed by the washing of regeneration and the blood of the Lamb, who hath given them to eat of the hidden Manna*; and the same divine food they have distributed for the spiritual nourishment of their brethren, and for their growth in grace and godliness, to the praise of the giver: And they have moreover received that new name + which no man knoweth faving he that receiveth it, neither can any one rob them of it, for it is written in the new stone, on which no foul flander can fasten, but is reflected back from it to the face of the flanderer; and yet tho' reviled they revile not again, but pity those that despitefully use them and perfecute them; and pray, that God will open their blind eyes, and give to their hard hearts a feeling fense of their danger, that thro' repentance their fin may be forgiven, and they brought home, to fee what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of

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^{*} Rev. ii. 17. + Ib.

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the world hath been hid in God*. As to what relates to Mr. Law's mystical writings, I refer, for their defence, to the worthy Mr. Payne before mentioned; and shall only add here an extract or two from Mr. Law's writings, by way of specimen of that excellent man's universal charity, and of his exalted idea of the divine mercy and love in the great work of man's redemption by Jesus Christ.

-" To the fallen fons of Adam, that which " was love, light and glory in heaven, be-" comes infinite pity and compassion on earth, " in a God cloathed with the nature of his " fallen creature, bearing all its infirmities, en-" tring into all its troubles, and in the meek " innocence of a Lamb of God, living a life, " and dying a death of all the fufferings due " to fin: Hence it was that when the divine " pity offered its own life-giving blood to be " poured on the ground, all outward nature " made full declaration of its atoning and re-" deeming power; the strength of the earth " did quake; the hardness of the rocks was " forced to split, and long covered graves to " give up their dead: A certain presage, that " all that come by the curse into nature and " creature, must give up its power; that all " kinds of hellish wrath, hardned malice, fiery " pride, felfish wills, tormenting envy, and " earthly paffions, which kept men under the " power of Satan, must have their fulness of " death, and fulness of a new life, from the * Eph. iii. 9.

" all powerful, all purifying blood of the " Lamb, which will never cease washing red " into white, till the earth is washed into the " chrystal purity of that glassy sea which is " before the throne, and all the fons of Adam " cloathed in fuch white as fits them for their " feveral mansions in their heavenly Father's " house."

Again, speaking of the all-redeeming, allrestoring love of God, he expresses himself thus:

" If long, long ages of fiery pain and " tormenting darkness, fall to the share of " many, or most of God's apostate crea-" tures; they will last no longer than till the " great fire of God has melted all arrogance. " into humility, and all that is felf has died " in the long agonies and bloody sweat of a " loft God, which is that all faving cross of " Christ, which will never give up its redeem-" ing power, till fin and finners have no more " a name amongst the creatures of God."

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Now he that could write these and many more fuch glorious things, and write them from his warm and loving heart, deferves a better name than that of Fanatic and a devourer of trash. The divine mystics are men of heavenly light and fire, are often carried beyond the reach of others, and are not to be scanned and circumscribed by the rule and compass of every little fystem of man's framing. They are

are chiefly taken up with the substance of things hoped for, and therefore are less attentive at times, to little exactnesses of language; nay, fometimes may indulge a harmless opinion that will not bear the strictest examination; but then it is to be observed, that where principles are right, a wrong opinion is but a little thing; and if fuch as are not capable of reaching higher, are disposed to take the advantage and to lay hold on the hem of their garment, they can leave it behind them, without fuffering any loss they have to care for; nor does their rank in the lift of worthies depend upon an eccentrical expression or sentiment; and therefore they are not to be degraded with a dash of the pen by the boldest censurer.

In page 93 of The Doctrine of Grace, &c. the Author introduces Savanorola, as another instance of genuine fanaticism; but his charges in this as well as some other characters are too general to prove any thing: It looks as if he thought, that his bare ipfe dixit were to be taken for granted in these cases, and so it may by the undifcerning. He brings him on the stage by the name of the virtuous Savanorola, which we may suppose is to be taken ironically or in fneer, as he introduces him only for contempt. I will not fay, that the author in this epithet alludes to the penitential confessions of Savanorola, wherein he humbles himself on account of his fins; for without fufficient cause I will not suspect any one of daring to purfue with reproachful charge or irony

irony a penitent, for fins committed before his conversion, or for fins repented of; for fure it is, that no one in grace can do this: And let therefore the reason remain with the author. Certain it is, Savanorola's publick character both for morals and learning was commendable; for even Paulus Jovius, who, thro' his attachments to the Pope, said as little good of him as he could help, confesses, that he was Christianis moribus ac optimis literis ornatissimus. But our author charges him with assuming the personage of a prophet and inspired preacher; whereas he should have also proved him to be a false prophet, and no inspired preacher, which he has not done. As to the prophetic part of his character, it is vouch'd for; as it is related of him, that he not only foretold the particular troubles of his country, but also the Reformation of the church, which actually came to pass; and as to his other prophecies relating to the defolation of the whole earth, the renovation of the universal church, and the conversion of the Heathens *, I do believe, upon better authority than Savanorola's, that these will certainly come to pass. But he also charges him with assuming the character of an inspired preacher: To which I shall only reply; that I hope, he also was so, as in that case he was the more likely to profit his hearers; and fure it is, that if we expect any thing extraordinary in this way, it must be

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^{*} See Poiret's Œcon. vol. iv. Premonition to the Reader.

from one that allows of inspiration, and not from one that derides the belief of it. Savanorola was brought to the stake. greater the shame of them that brought him to it; tho' indeed, it would have been little short of a miracle if he had escaped it; for, as Paulus Jovius tells us, he had the madness to call in question the infallibility of his holiness the Pope-Vejana declamandi libertate sacrosanctam potestatem summi Pontificis in dubium devocavit. And it is moreover his character, that he was Infignis corruptionis Chriftianorum, præsertim statús ecclesiastici, reprebenfor: A sharp reprover of the corruptions of the times, and particularly of the Ecclefiastical State *; for which part of his character I refer the reader, in particular, to his Lamentatio Sponfæ Christi: No wonder then that he was fentenced to death, at the profecution of the Pope, deposcente Pontifice. He was tortured upon the rack, afterwards strangled, and then burnt at Florence, An. Dom. 1498, to the great grief of all the good citizens, magno cum luctu bonorum civium. See a short account of him at the end of his Treatife De simplicitate vitæ Christianæ; an excellent little book, and worthy of a translation, if it were but to refell the charge of fanaticism brought against its Author, as this piece together with that of his Meditations on the Psalms of David, do exhibit a lively picture of devout humility, and of a fober unaffected piety. But his Lord-

^{*} Biblioth. Myft.

ship fays, upon the credit of Guicciardini, that be disavow'd his pretensions on the rack, and dy'd fulen and filent at the stake, without any remaining symptom of his former Enthusiasm. What delirium and disorder of mind, what involuntary confessions the excruciating pains of the rack, under the hands of our enemies, might extort from the stoutest of us, we cannot tell: All are not alike supported in Martyrdom, and God only knows how we might behave under it, if called to it. The merciful laws of our land (and God be praised for our living under merciful laws and a merciful Prince) allow fo much to the weakness of human nature, and to the impressions that constraint and restraint might occasion, as to proceed by this maxim, that Nemo tenetur respondere in vinculis, and therefore even the fetters are knocked off from the prisoner that is to make his defence: But what disorder in the human mind must torture, without a miracle, be supposed to occafion! And therefore, whatever is then extorted from the agonizing sufferer against himself, will pass for nothing with equitable judges: Besides, we well know from the history of our own Martyrs, what false representations have been published of their behaviour and confesfions by the bigotted Clergy of the Church of Rome: And fure I think that he who has any relish for divine writings, as those of Savanorola are, and which give us the truest picture of the Author, will not hastily take up reports to his prejudice from a political historian like Guicciardini, or from a sycophant of the Pope, like

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like Paulus Jovius. But, fays his Lordship, he died fullen, and filent at the stake. What a remark have we here! Who shall distinguish betwixt composed gravity and fullenness in such circumstances? Who shall judge of what pasfes in the heart at such a time? The behaviour of a dying man has fomething facred in it, and fufficient, one would think, to strike us with awe and reverence, and to check the unfeasonable freedoms of a bold criticism. May God support and accept us all in the dying hour, however we may be affected or appear to others! I shall conclude this remark with observing; that something of a devout turn of mind is absolutely requifite in order to savour the writings of Savanorola and other Mystical Authors; and that a curious or cavilling disposition will infallibly unfit us for receiving any benefit from them; and therefore all such persons had much better let them alone.

Facob Behmen, called the Teutonic Theofopher, is another character which the Author of The Doctrine of Grace, &c. in p. 150 and elsewhere, introduces to pass sentence upon, without fo much as fuffering him to fpeak for himself: However, the true Mystics will always find fome to plead their cause, and to make appear, that they are not to be brought on the stage, like men of paste-board, to be dispatched with a dagger of lath, as the Author may suppose. His Lordship thinks it charge enough for the execution of the Teutonic, to call his works a heap of unmeaning,

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THE MYSTICAL WRITERS. 443 unintelligible words, and to tell us, that he can conceive no other of them than the jargon of the Spirit of infatuation. But we defire to be excused from admitting his Lordship's conceptions for an infallible test of truth and error; and have to observe, that tho' 7. Bebmen's writings may carry no meaning with them, according to the measure of his Lordship's understanding in such matters, yet they may be found, not only intelligible (in a great part of them at least) but also fraught with rich meaning, by fome others. To give the following testimony by an ingenious and learned hand. "Whatsoever the thrice great Her-" mes delivered as oracles from his prophetical " Tripos; or Pythagoras spake by authority; " or Socrates debated; or Aristotle affirm-" ed; yea whatever divine Plato prophecy'd; " or Plotinus proved; this and all this, or a " far higher and profounder philosophy is (I " think) contained in the Teutonick's writings *." And yet his Lordship conceives of them as the jargon of the Spirit of infatuation: But wherefore fo? For if, as he confesses, they were unintelligible (that is, to his Lordship) for that very reason they might, for any thing he knows to the contrary, come from the Spirit of truth as well as the Spirit of error, and fo the defect might lye in his Lordship's intellect: And therefore we may be allowed to fay,

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^{*} See preface to a work intitled, Jacob Behmen's Theofophick Philosophy unfolded, shewing the verity and utility of the doctrines contained in the writings of that divinely instructed Author, by Edward Taylor, Gent.

that he has conceived an uncharitable opinion in the case. The following anecdote from Jacob Behmen's life, as prefixed to his Mysterium Magnum, proves, that some learned and good men have conceived very differently of J. Behmen, notwithstanding the obscurity that appeared to them, as touching his mystical knowledge; as the following extract will shew.

"The Elector of Saxony, in whose country this Author was born and lived (by occupation a Shoe-maker) hearing of his wonderful knowledge, fent for him to Drefden, where he was examined in his presence, by fix Doctors in divinity, befides Mathematicians: Five of the Doctors names are mentioned, as Dr. Hoben, Dr. Meysner, Dr. Baldwin, Dr. Gerbard, and Dr. Leyfern. They began to examine him concerning his writings, and the high mysteries therein; and also propounded to him many profound queries in divinity, philosophy and the mathematicks; to all which he answered with such meekness of Spirit, fuch depth of knowledge and fulness of matter, that none of these Doctors and Professors, returned one word of dislike or contradiction. The Electoral Prince much admired him, and demanded the refult of their judgment upon the conference: But the examiners intreated his Highness to have patience, till the Spirit of the man had more plainly declared itself, for in many particulars they could not understand him: nevertheless, they hoped that hereafter he would make it more clear to them, and then they would tender their judgment. Then Facob

Jacob Bebmen, in his turn, propounded some questions to them; to which they returned anfwers with much modesty, amazed to hear from a man of his low rank and education, fuch myflerious depths as were beyond the fathom of their comprehension. Then he conferred with them touching most of the errors of those times, pointing, as it were with the finger, at the originals of them feverally, declaring unto them the naked truth, and the great difference betwixt it and some erroneous supposals. To the Astrologers also (for there were two prefent) he discovered something of their science, shewing wherein they had stuffed it with heathenish errors and superstitions, and how far it had a ground in the Mystery of Nature. The Elector then took him apart, difcourfed with him upon many difficult points, and being well fatisfied with his answers, courteously difmiffed him."

Some time after this, Dr. Meysner and Dr. Gerhard meeting at Wittenburgh, fell into discourse about Jacob Behmen, wherein they expressed their admiration at the continued harmony of the Scriptures produced by him at his examination, declaring that they would not for the world have gratisted the malice of his enemies in censuring him; for, says Dr. Meysner, "who knows but God may have designed him for some extraordinary work; and how can we with justice pass judgment against that which we understand not; for surely he seems to be a man of wonderful high gifts

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gifts of the Spirit, tho' we cannot at present, from any ground of certainty, approve or disapprove of many things he holds." After this, says the Author of his life, it pleased God to turn the hearts of many learned men and preachers, both to study themselves and to instruct others in those doctrines of Regeneration, and the means of attaining it, which they had formerly, in a blind zeal, exclaimed against as heretical; and ceased from preaching up disputes and controversies in religion, many of which being no ways determinable but by the intervention of a divine light in the New Birth, &c."

Now upon comparing his Lordship's cenfure of Jacob Behmen with the judgment of these German Divines, are we not warranted in faying, that the former has pronounced a fentence premature and rash? And that we ought not only to forbear condemning what we do not understand, but even to conceive favourably of it, if the party be a person fearing God and leading a Christian life, as Jacob Behmen was, in a degree of eminence, not only exhorting to and inculcating every virtue and every grace, but also exhibiting a pattern of it in his own example. It is moreover to be noted, that many parts of his works * do contain plain instructive lessons on the great duties of repentance, faith, felf-denial, refignation and charity, which even persons of a moderate capacity

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^{*} See in particular his Way to Christ.

THE MYSTICAL WRITERS. 447 may understand. Dr. H. More, who is far from ascribing too much to Jacob Behmen, allows, that he may be read profitably on the subject of Regeneration: And in his Divine Dialogues, where he disputes his divine or infallible inspiration, yet he assigns to him an inferior illumination from the Spirit of nature, rifing up in a kind of complexional philadelphianism: "This, says he, I conceive, is all " the peculiar inspiration or illumination which " these Theosophists had at the bottom; which " yet is not so contemptible, but that they " justly magnify it above the grim ferocities " of the superstitions in the imbittered Churches " of the world, who have not fo good an in-" spiration as this, but their tongues and hearts " are fet on fire of bell ": This light of na-" ture, I fay, is abundantly well appointed, " both for right and skill, to chastise and re-" proach the gross and grievous immoralities " of hypocritical religions, and to be subser-" vient to that truth and life that is really di-" vine. p. 351. Dial. iv." But however this wonderful man came by his knowledge (for he was an original and no copy) it certainly was above the ordinary course of nature that God opened in his foul fuch an amazing treafure of wisdom, as taught him so many and great mysteries, brought him acquainted with the birth of all things, unlocked to him the fecrets of universal nature, and enlightened his

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^{*} James iii. 6.

tures: So that he may properly be confidered as a monument of God's fovereignty raifed up in his age, to mortify the pride of the wife disputers of this world, and to baffle their vain pretences of fearthing out the hidden things of God by the help of their art scientifical, so fetting up human learning as an idol for all to worship, and taking to themselves the honour that belongeth to the Father of lights, who giveth wisdom to the humble and poor in Spirit, and fendeth the rich empty away, however they may boast of their fancied fulness. And thus doth God affert the honour of his divine fovereignty in every age *; to lead men to the fountain of true wildom, whilst instead of profiting by these lessons, they go on to hew out to themselves their own broken cisterns, and to speak evil of every fream that runs not in their own channel. And this is one main reason of that general opposition that is made to mystical divinity, and to the mystical writers, viz. because they use those weapons which the Scriptures put into their hands, to

^{*} I have known many instances of this kind myself in unlearned men and women, whose knowledge in divine things has associated me, and left me no room to doubt of their being taught of God in a supernatural way; and I do believe, that God will shortly manifest his power, in a very remarkable manner, by pouring out his Spirit of wisdom more abundantly upon the semale sex; as for other reasons, so in particular to humble the pride of those learned men who abuse their learning to the dishonour of the Spirit of truth, and to the building up a Babel of opinions and contentions in the world, to the misseading of the people, and to the propagation of infidelity.

combat the boafted sufficiency of proud man, and every thing in him that leads to the exaltation of that abominable idol felf, infifting strongly on the necessity of denying felf, bearing the cross, becoming little children, and abasing, yea, as it were, annihilating ourselves before God, and coming to him as poor creatures that have nothing to give, but all to receive from him; that so he may fashion us anew according to his good pleasure, and do all his works and will in us. Now nature rifes against this doctrine and against them that teach it; and yet these are Scripture-lessons that we must learn sooner or later, or it will be the worse for us. And here among all the things that we are commanded to forfake *. that so we may be disciples of Christ, there is scarcely any facrifice that we are more unwilling to offer up than the pride or felf complacency we take in knowledge, especially where any stand in a high degree of reputation in the world for their learning and skill; and yet this right eye must be plucked out, and we become fenfible, that we know nothing yet as we ought to know, before we can profit in the school of Christ; and therefore it is said: "If any man feemeth to be wife in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wife +." And here it is to be observed; that it is not with mystical divinity as with the speculative sciences, where we must first furnish the head with many rules, and much systematical know-

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^{*} Luke xiv. 33.

^{† 1} Cor. iii. 18.

ledge, before we can properly proceed to practice; but in the former, we must begin with the practical part, for the head must be enriched from the heart, and divine light arise from the Divine Life; and therefore David says, I am wifer than the aged, because I keep thy commandments.

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The obscurity observable in the phrases and writings of fome authors of the myflical class, more particularly in those of Jacob Bebmen, has been formed into an objection against them; but this chiefly by those that have not as yet properly applied themselves to profit by them. All arts and professions have their appropriate terms fuited to their respective provinces, and fo has Mystical Theology for a much higher reason, viz. as it treats of subjects beyond the reach of nature and natural knowledge, and is conversant with the things of a new world, which words of familiar use in language cannot properly express, but debase and fall greatly short of in the ideas appendent to them; and therefore they are often led to use new words, and fuch figures of speech as may feem very strange and incongruous to those that first enter into this school; but by patience and application come to be well understood and approved of by the diligent learner, as well as the words of any other language, which we only became masters of by familiar practice. When our Lord said; He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in bim ;

bim *; what an offence was this to the disciples at first? And what an offence is it at this day to the mere letter-learned religionist? And how often have I been offended at it? And yet they that truly believe in the doctrine of the New Birth, are no longer subject to this offence; and therefore they feek not to explain it away by figurative elusions; nor would part with one jot or tittle of the literal expression. In like manner, when some of the higher myflics speak of transformation and loss of self (la perte à soi-meme ;) they mean no more than the foregoing words of our Saviour mean, that is, of being one with Christ, as members of his mystical body, thro' dying to their own will, or, as it is expressed in our Homilies, by Spiritual incorporation. Thus, all spiritual things are and can only be known (however they are expressed) according to that degree of spiritual capacity, or improvement, in which the learner or proficient stands-And the same holds true with respect to natural knowledge. But there is also another reason for that venerable obscurity in which we see certain spiritual truths involved, viz. that it may ferve as a vail to conceal them the more from those that are not as yet fit for them; and also to guard them against the abuse of such as are of a mocking Spirit, which would only ferve to their greater condemnation; and therefore our Lord fays, Cast not your pearls before swine; and for this reason, he couched many divine truths in pa-

^{*} John vi. 56.

rables, only to be known of those that were in a disposition to receive them. Now the vail thus spread over certain sacred truths, to conceal them from the unworthy and profane, answers this good end, viz. Such persons, tho' possessed of the outward expression, yet being unable to come at the meaning, but by ferious study and pains; such a previous course of discipline and application might serve as a good means to rectify their disorder, to remove their prejudice, and to prepare them as proper veffels to receive the truth. And thus proceeded even the wifer Heathens, with respect to what little truth they were possessed of, in the more recondite mysteries of their religion: None were admitted into them till they had passed their novitiate, or preparatory stages of discipline. Agreeable to the foregoing obfervation are the following words extracted from the preface of Jacob Behmen to his work called the Mysterium Magnum.

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"If it should so fall out, that when these our writings are read, the reader should not presently apprehend and understand the fame, seeing this ground (which yet hath its full soundation and pregnant concordance, as well with the Scripture as the light of nature) hath for a long time been very dark, and yet by divine grace is given to plain simplicity; let him not despise and reject the same, according to the course and custom of the wicked world; but look upon the ground of practice which is therein should be the ground of practice which is therein."

" shewn, and pray to God for light and un-" derstanding; and at last he will understand " our ground; and it will find very great love " and acceptance with him. But we have " written nothing for the proud and haughty " wifelings, who know enough already, and " yet indeed know nothing at all; but we have " laid a strong bolt before the understanding " of folly, not to understand our meaning, " being they wilfully and willingly ferve Sa-" tan: But by the children of God we de-" fire to be clearly and fundamentally under-" flood; and do heartily and readily commu-" nicate [to them] our knowledge given to " us of God, feeing the time of fuch revela-"tion is born: Therefore, let every one fee " and take heed what fentence and censure he " passeth: Every one shall accordingly receive " his reward."

From this unfuitableness of disposition in the readers for the right confideration of divine things, and thro' their being unacquainted with inward and spiritual religion, does chiefly proceed that ignorance that is in many, touching the character of the true Mystic; and from this ignorance their captiousness and cavillings at their phrases and expressions. It is well known, that many of these authors express extremé self-abasement before God by the term felf-annihilation; now, who but some frivolous critic would go about to preve from the scholastic definition of this term, that it is impossible to reduce ourselves to nothing, when common fense Gg3

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fense will tell us, that they do not mean thereby a physical annihilation? To lay a superstitious stress on such grammatical rigours, is the character of a pædagogue. On the other hand, where some of them speak of the soul's divinization thro' its union with Christ (according to that expression in Scripture, of our being made partakers of the Divine Nature *) what an injurious perversion of their meaning would it be, to reprefent them as equalling man with God? and what little quarter would they give to any one that should go about to interpret like expressions in Scripture to such a fense? That there is a kind of divinity ascribed, in the facred Writings, to the true members of Christ's mystical body (whereby they are called the fons of God, &c.) we know; in which subordinate sense the Mystics sometimes speak of it; and which Dr. Henry More thus judiciously distinguishes, speaking of the difference betwixt the union of Christ and ours with the Divinity: " In the one, fays he, it is as lux in corpore lucido; in the other, as luor men in corpore diaphano." The divinity in Christ, is as the light in the sun; the divinity in his members, as the fun-shine in the air: In which distinction he agrees with Jacob Behmen. Again, such of the Mystical Writers as do more especially treat of divine love and the consolations of the Spirit, speak of the espousals and of the marriage of the soul with Christ; and of the consummation or perfec-

^{* 2} Pet. i. 4.

tion of its spiritual union with the heavenly bridegroom, and that often in the words of the Canticles, or such as are authorized by other scriptural expressions; and yet how have scotling men, with their unsavoury ideas, charged upon them their own carnal conceptions? and how would they have treated the song of Solomon, but for that canonical bar which serves it for a sence against their audacious liberties?

As there are false mystics, and mystics of an inferior degree, so it is not pretended here, that even the best of them have been infallible or impeccable, or have always walked in the divine light; they have been men of like paffions with others, and not free from infirmities, faults and errors; but as far forth as they were mystical or spiritual, they were more excellent than their neighbours; and he that can overlook the precious pearls that enrich their writings, and fit down to pick out the straws that are scattered therein, shall, for me, have his pickings for his pains. What a mean artifice is this of building up a paltry character of straw on the blemishes of great and good men! Thus vermine feed and fatten on the dung that falls from the fairest and goodliest of animals. And as they were more than common men, so neither are they to be meafured by the common standard of little creeping critics, who wrigling by mood and tense thro' all the rules of Lilly's Grammar, catch words and fyllables, but never foar for wisdom. Nor was it the only privilege of these heavenborn Gg4

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born fouls, to be unfettered by the rules of art, but being actuated by a higher principle than art or nature knows, they were carried by the divine Sophia, far beyond human ken, into the boundless extent of the intellectual system; whilst the short-sighted and envious among their brethren have reproached them with their difcoveries in that new world, which they are forced to confess, is all Terra incognita to themselves: Nor has their progress ended here, having fometimes been transported on the wings of holy contemplation above the limits of the ideal kingdom, to feast with angels on the heavenly Manna of divine, mysterious love. These are not the flights of a poetical fancy, but the relation of well attested truths. then they had their depths as well as heights, and not only paffed thro' all the anguishing forms of the New Birth, but also thro' various trials of darkness and diffress; as well to keep them from being exalted above measure *, as to exercise their faith and dependence, and to make them know and feel that God alone was the giver of all their good things: And if at times they were enabled to fay with the apostle, we are filled with comfort, and exceeding joyful in all our tribulation +; fo, at other times, like him, were they troubled on every fide; without were fightings, and within were fears 1; nay, the greater part of them have mostly been kept in low and humble frames; to witness particularly in that good father of the church

^{* 2} Cor. xii. 7. † 2 Cor. vii, 14. ‡ Ibid. Ephrem

Ephrem Syrus; and the same appears from the confessions of many of the later Mystics, who are all men of truth, and never lye to ferve the cause of a system or a party, but saithfully declare their experiences, like that true hearted Mystical Writer, who styles himself the long mournful and forely distressed Isaac Pennington. And it is moreover to be observed, that most of them, especially such as were called to any great degree of usefulness in their ministry, generally suffered persecution and cruel treatment from their brethren, exemplifying, in their own particulars, that truth delivered by the apostle: As he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now *. Thus thro' manifold temptations they learned experience, and thro' experience taught wisdom: For such is the way of the divine Sophia in training up her children; not in ease and security, but in sharp trials and severe exercises, according to the following testimony of the wife fon of Sirach: " If a man commit himself unto her, he shall inherit her, and his generation shall hold her in possession: For at the first, she will walk with him by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her discipline, until she may trust his soul, and try him by her laws: Then will she return the strait way unto him, and comfort him, and shew him her secrets +."

^{*} Gal. iv. 29.

⁺ Eccles. iv.

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Madam Guion speaks of three kinds of martyrs *: First, of such as were martyrs to the faith of the true God, before the time of our Saviour's incarnation: Secondly, of fuch as fuffered martyrdom for the faith of Christ under the gospel: And thirdly, of those who in these last days have or shall suffer martyrdom as witnesses to the internal kingdom of the Spirit of God; which last she speaks of, not as a martyrdom of blood, in general, like the other two, but as a martyrdom of difgrace, perfecution and heavy croffes both interiour and exteriour; and indeed the fufferings and perfecutions which most of those Myitical Writers have undergone, who were in any eminent degree witnesses to the reign of the Holy Spirit, may well ferve to confirm the truth of the distinction. And to what she advances on this subject, we may add, as a peculiar part of their sufferings, that they came from the members of the same church with themselves, and who professed in substance the fame doctrines. Madam Guion was a noted instance of this (that mad-woman, as a certain lord calls her, to whom I wish well when I wish him a tenth part of her wisdom) the was perfecuted almost throughout her whole life by the pastors and governors of that very church to which she liv'd in subjection, and to which she submitted all her writings; throughout the whole of which (confisting of forty volumes) she never meddles with the

^{*} La Vie de Madame Guien, vol. iii. p. 75.

doctrine, discipline, government, or constitution of it, but treats entirely of the inward and spiritual life: Nor could the defence * of herfelf, tho' drawn from the fathers, and the allowed authorities of her church, avail any thing before judges resolved to condemn her; one of whom was the famous Boffuet Bishop of Meaux, who after having inveigled her into a religious house under his own jurisdiction, and of which he was visitor, practiced with her by infnaring artifices, and that upon her fick-bed (but practiced in vain) to extort a formal confession from her, under her hand writing, that she was a Heretic, and did not believe in the word incarnate +. Elles étoient à peine bors de ma chambre qu'il vint vers mon lit, & me dit; qu'il vouloit que je lui signasse tout à l'heure, que je ne croiois pas au verbe Incarne." What severity of censure can equal fuch behaviour? and that towards an innocent woman, who lov'd her Saviour more than she loved her life? But what was to be expected from that political prelate, who, taking his cue from Madam Maintenon, regulated his measures by the chimes of the times as they went at Versailles? Such are the men that steer their course by the maxims of worldly prudence; and that the bishop of Meaux was fuch a one evidently appears from his own words given us by Madame Guion, in p. 224 of the same vol. " Il venoit plein de fureur

^{*} See her Justifications, 3 vols. † See vol. iii. of her Life, written by herself, p. 218, and p. 221.

The bishop of Meaux was a man of acute reason, a sharp critic, had much knowledge in systematical divinity, and a great share of learning; and these are accomplishments not to be spoken against; for in their right use and place, and when joined to an humble and good heart, they are ornaments to the most spiritual divine: But where the heart is not

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well principled, they will become false, and only render the possessor a more accomplished enemy to every thing that is spiritual. Here reason can dwell with the crafty hypocrite, and teach him to play the Fox more successfully in the Sheep's cloathing; nay to undermine his neighbour with words smoother than oil, and eyes lift up to heaven: Here learning, by the help of a left-handed kind of criticism, can juggle with the letter of Scripture, so as to set it against its true meaning, and help the man of head-knowledge to mock at the religion of the heart.

The Seraphick Archbishop Fenelon had as great accomplishments both natural and acquired as the bishop of Meaux, nor was he the less of a mystic on that account: Nay, his talents of reason, criticism, &c. derived lustre and honour from his principles, to dignify the scholar: Nor did it at all lessen his spiritual character, that he was the polite gentleman; for good breeding no more takes any thing away from the true mystic, than the roughness of the ascetic adds to him. Mr. de Fenelon had also a good heart, and so all things became him; and yet this great man with all his accomplishments, thought not himself too great to learn wisdom of a woman, for he esteemed Madam Guion, and profited by her in divine knowledge: And that great man who disdains to receive any instruction from a holy, understanding woman, neither knows himself nor the power of God; and moreover forgets who

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expounded the way of God more perfectly * to the great Apollos whose praise is in the gospel. And as the Archbishop of Cambray was an humble man, so had he set his affections on things above; and in this way he not only attained to the knowledge of divine things, but likewise to the experience of them; and hence was enabled to write fo divinely on the pure difinterested love of God, and the internal operations of his Spirit. These subjects indeed appeared no better than the jargon of the Spirit of infatuation to Mr. de Meaux, but then it is to be remembered, that Mr. de Meaux was a man of this world, and bufily employed in following a court-interest thro' court-intrigues; nay, had actually engag'd to M. Maintenon for the condemnation of Madam Guion's writings, as the leading victim to the downfal of Mr. de Fenelon. The last had too much of Christian simplicity even to suspect the defigns of his adverfary; and had he suspected them, he would by no means have been a match for him at the weapons of political fubtlety; and so he lost his credit at court; but then the Archbishop quitted a court with better principles than the bishop kept his ground in it; nor was this any loss to the former; for tho' spiritual men are best qualified to do good in fuch places, yet fuch places are feldom fit for spiritual men; and therefore instead of profiting others, they are in danger of suffering loss themselves in better things than the courts of

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^{*} Acts xviii.

princes have to give. In a word, the archbishop of Cambray and the bishop of Meaux were men of very different characters and principles, and yet if the latter had been as true hearted as the former, difference with respect to mystical divinity needed not to have been any bar betwixt them, for none is more humble and charitable than the true mystic; and therefore tho' their fentiments did not conform, yet Christian love is very broad, and here they might have met and been good friends. But the latter thought his capacity equal to all things, and from a wrong principle fet himfelf to judge and condemn characters and doctrines that were above his reach, not knowing, that the fagacity of the most improved understanding has its bounds far short of the spiritual life.

The ways and operations of the Spirit of God in holy fouls, are fubjects of a facred nature, to be confidered with modesty and reverence, not to be made the subjects of rash cenfure, much less to be treated with the petulancy of a frothy wit: Great allowances likewife are to be made for things that we do not understand, and are not according to our meafure; nay, tho' attended with unfavourable appearances in leffer matters, if found in persons upright and pious in the main of their lives; allowing much to our own misapprehensions both as to their expressions * and actions, when

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^{*} There may be some expressions or positions in very excellent mystical authors that require a candid interpreta-

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not according to the common rules: Here we should carefully walk by that rule of charity which bopeth all things for the best, lest we be found to speak evil of that which is of God and not of man. I am fure, that the following extract to the present purpose, from that loving and wife-hearted man Jeremiah White * will please the pious and charitable reader. It is taken from his preface to the mystical writings of Peter (called the divine) Sterry. " Who " among us is yet able to comprehend all the " distinct ages and growths of good minds? to understand the various improvements and " attainments, with the several capacities and " operations which are peculiar thereto? It is " impossible for us to set the bounds to spiri-" tual things, or to stint that Spirit which is " a fountain of divine light and life in all re-" generated fouls, continually fending forth " new ftreams, and running along with a " fresh succession of waters without any stop " or limit. We are too proud to understand " the condescentions, too low to take the " height, too shallow to fathom the depth, " too narrow to measure the breadth, too short " to reach the length of the divine truth and " goodness, and the various communications

tion as well as the like in other authors, and some that will be readily given up to the reasonable objector: The substance of their doctrines, and those things in which the most experienced among them agree being only here defended.

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^{*} Author of a most excellent Book called The Restora-

" of them to us; nor can we affign the highest " or the lowest state of saints, whilst they are " here below. We ought not to fay, all " above this, is fancy, dream and delution; " all below that, is common, carnal and fu-" perstitious: As we ought not then to de-" spife that which is below; so let us not cen-" fure and condemn that which is above us. " Bleffed be God, all good fouls, amidst their " greatest distances from one another here be-" low, do all meet in the divine comprehen-" fion above; we are all infolded in the di-" vine arms; all incircled in the divine love: "That has breadth and length, and depth " and height enough to reach and hold us all: " And if we cannot yet receive and embrace " each other in our feveral growths, measures " and attainments, it is because we have lit-"tle, dark, narrow and contracted hearts, " feel but little of the love of Christ, nor are " yet filled with that Spirit which is the spring, " the center and the circle to all good Spirits " in heaven and on earth. There is as great " a difference in the statures of fouls, as of " bodies, &c."

The retired lives of many of the Mystical Writers have been urged as an objection to them by some; and the author of The Doctrine of Grace, &c. has thus improved upon it in that foul comparison before mentioned, where he resembles them to impure or savage animals: Hence, says he, their whole lives are passed (like H h

Mr. Law's * among his Ascetics) in woods and forests, far removed from the converse of mankind. I leave those who are acquainted with the Mystical Writers, to judge on whom the odium of the comparison falls; and shall only advise his Lordship to mend his pen when he draws the characters of fuch holy persons; for how can they be impure, who constantly exercise themselves in the pure love of God? In what fense can they be called favage, who diligently apply themselves to follow the heavenly pattern of the meek and humble Fesus? These then are misnomers with a witness, and injuriously reproachful to persons of their distinguished piety. Something has been said before, to shew that the character of Mystic does not imply any separation from society, tho' that of Hermit or Anchoret does, for the first, tho' living and converfing much in the heart of a city, as well answers to his name, as he that passes his time in the most retired solitude; for the distinction relates to the inward state of the person, and not to the outward circumstance of his abode. It must be confessed, that persons of this character in general, where they are at liberty for the choice, or not fitted for a more extensive usefulness in publick, do for the most part prefer the more retired life, as more suitable to their contemplative turn of

^{*} Upon my own knowledge I can affirm, as to Mr. Law; that he lived in a market town, and was a gentleman of a free conversation. He resided many years before his death at King's-Cliffe in Northamptonshire, where he often received company.

mind, and more free from those scenes of multiplicity and distraction which might prove hindrances to them in their Christian progress; especially if they are of a tender frame, and so the more liable to diffipation and injury thro' much activity. Others are led to chuse the fame, for the fake of greater composure and recollection, that they may be the more at liberty to profit their brethren by their religious instructions in writing; which may be called a more lasting kind of preaching, as it descends to future generations; and so the labours of these in private and of their brethren in publick, may be compared to casting the gospel net on both sides of the ship, to the catching a greater multitude of fishes. Others again, may find it needful for them to avoid the throng of life, either because of the strength of their natural propenfities to run them into danger; or thro' the weakness of an overflexible temper to refift temptation; and hence are led to chuse a more retired course for discipline and fafety, that so escaping the pollutions of the world, and the sin that most easily besets them, they may the better run with patience the race that is set before them *. And what has any one here to object to the motive of a conduct fo confcientious and praise-worthy? The God of nature has fitted men with different talents for different employments; and the same God of grace is ready to sanctify them to his glory in their several ways. Let then

^{*} Heb. xii. I.

every one well consider Quid valeant bumeri, and not censure his brother who fears God as much as himself, but whilst he thinketh be standeth, take heed lest he fall *. Bishop Kenn wrote a valuable little Treatife called The Retir'd Christian; and tho' bishop Kenn was of the mystical class, I hope his book is no worse for that. Archbishop Leighton, who had few equals +, finding his office too much for him in the decline of life, and tired out with the political cabals of his brethren, refigned and retired, that he might spend the remainder of his days in peace; and yet I hope his example is not to be condemned, or his excellent writings less worthy of esteem, because he was a Mystic. And there is a time of life for most to retire at, if they would but know it, who instead of this go on to tie their hearts still tighter to the world with those cords of vanity and false interest which nothing but death can untwift. But methinks, I hear some wellfledg'd candidate for more preferment, on his way to St. James's, faying, Let your light shine before men: And so say I: But he that sticks this faying only as a feather in his cap, to shew how high he stands in worldly favour, and that he may the more infult the mortified life of the pious Christian, shews, that he understands the Scripture as little as he does himfelf; for that portion of it has nothing to do with the difference betwixt a more or less pub-

^{* 1} Cor. x. 12. † See his character by Bishop Burnet, in The History of his own Times.

ick way of life. But how many think they shine, who are no better than wandring stars of darkness; or only shine like those deluding meteors which lead benighted travellers into fwamps or pit-falls. Many also shine at operas and balls, who I think will hardly, the more for that, fet up for examples to the foregoing rule. But if, on the other hand, thou who fayest this, art one that hast light in thyself, and also light for others, using this world without abusing it or being conformed to it; and acceptest a higher station, that the light of thy good example and good works may shine the brighter and shine the further: In this case, good luck have thou with thine honour; thou shalt have praise of God, and therefore art well intitled to the same from man; for they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever: But these are not the men who despise such of their brethren as have a dispensation committed to them in less conspicuous stations; nay, they cherish and make much of them, and give diligent heed, that they shall want nothing that is needful for life and godliness, knowing that they cannot carve for themselves in the things of this life like many others: No, they are the men of this world who deride and treat them as wild beafts, as if they grudg'd them the free use of the elements. But let fuch know, that they are not the contemptible animals they would represent them, but are men of a found mind, and of a Christian spirit; know how to en-Hh 3

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dure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ *, and should need require it, can come forth from their obscurity to look them in the face with undifmayed countenances; for they have a zeal for God and from God; and the weapons of their warfare are not carnal but spiritual, and of use for reproof and correction. But wherefore all this cry against a few retir'd Mystics so thinly scattered thro' the world? As if they were only fit to be hunted down like hares for the diversion of their unprovoked adversaries? Why cannot they be content with their larger share (thro' these being out of their way) in those good things they seek and enjoy, and let them alone? For fure I think, as to some of them, that if they had been more of the world, and in the world, even their natural talents might have recommended them to a much better dividend than has fallen to their lot; and they might have chanc'd to jostle some others out of the way to those riches and honours which do not fo well become them.

I have here to defire the reader not to think the lefs favourably or honourably of the excellent Myftical Writers, on account of any unworthiness in their present advocate; for tho' I think this Defence sufficient for the charge it is concerned with; yet persuaded I am, that no one who is not of the same order and character with themselves is fully qualified

^{# 2} Tim. ii. 3.

to do them justice: However, this office was incumbent on me, and I have so far discharged it with all good conscience, and in simplicity of truth, without being discouraged by any consequences, that may follow from thus defending the insulted characters of those, whom I believe from my heart to have been the most excellent among the fervants of God, in every age of the church; whose holy examples I wish I had more followed than I have done; whose writings I reverence; and with whom, Lord hear my prayer! may my lot be cast for all eternity! As this volume is already come to its proper fize, and the promifed time of its publication is at hand, I shall add but little at present on this subject.

The Mystics were not a little instrumental, especially in Germany and the Low Countries, in opening people's eyes, and disposing their minds in favour of the Reformation; as the drift of their writings is to lead thro' the exteriour, with which the church of Rome is overwhelmed, to the interiour or new life, which is the substance of reformation in all, both in that and every church; in reference to which Dr. H. More says; "Other performances whether "of morality or religion, arising from mere "self-love, let them be as specious or goodly as you please; they are at best but as pre"parations, or the more refined exercises of a "fort of theological Hobbianism *." It de-

^{*} See the Doctor's Narrative of himself.

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ferves mention here, that a little book called Theologia Germanica, containing a summary of the principles of mystical or spiritual theology (which well deferves a translation into English) was highly esteemed and recommended by Luther, and was doubtless of good use to him in his great work of the Reformation: It passed thro' a new edition under the hands of that celebrated mystical divine John Arndt, superintendant of Lunenburgh; and is extolled by Dr. H. More, by the name of That Golden Little Book which first so pierced and affected But we must go farther back for what appears to have been the leading ministration towards embracing a publick Reformation of Religion in those parts; and herein Gerardus Magnus, al. Gerhard Groot, born at Daventer, in Overyssel 1340, was an instrument of renown; who being converted himself in an extraordinary manner, renounced the gayeties and follies of the world; gave himself up to the ministry of the word, and went about exhorting to repentance in publick; and preached the gospel with great power, nothing discouraged by opposition from the bigots and pharifees of his own church, from laying open the corruptions of the times in all orders and degrees of men. People left their business and their meals to attend his instructions, whilst the churches could not contain the numbers that flocked to hear him, insomuch that in a few years a great change in religion for the better appeared throughout Utrecht, Guelderland, Brabant, Flanders, Friseland, Westphalia and Saxony. Cotemtemporary and acquainted with him were those two other famous mystical divines Rusbrochius and Thaulerus, who by their preaching and written instructions greatly helped forward the work of vital godliness, and still preach to the heart in their writings. Dr. Salvarvil, archdeacon of Brabant, wrote the life of this Gerhard, and affirms that many thousands up and down the Low Countries were convinced by his ministry, and turned from the world to Christ. To the great Dr. Gerhard succeeded in the government of a house of regular Canons at Windesham the good Dr. Florentius, of noble extraction, under whose tender care was educated the divine Thomas à Kempis, whose book Of the Imitation of Jesus Christ (tho' but a small part of his works) is well known amongst us; and whose character as a mystic divine shines bright in the constellation of faints of that denomination. The famous John Gerson (reputed by some to be the author of The Imitation, &cc.) flourished at the fame time with Thomas à Kempis; was chancellor of Paris, and ambassador from the king of France to the council of Constance. This great mystic divine laboured hard in his writings for the restoration of purity of doctrine in the church of Rome; and when he found that this stuck with the Pope, he went so far as to write a treatise stiled, De Auferibilitate Papa ab Ecclefia: Concerning the Removal of the Pope from the Church. And indeed it is very observable, that the Mystics were never good friends to Papal tyranny or Papal superstition, but were

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the great preparers of the way by their writings and their examples to a true reformation in the church. I must here confess, that I stand much indebted to the writings of Thomas à Kempis, among other authors of the same class, for admonition, instruction and consolation; and many, I doubt not, can join with me in acknowledging the like obligation; and yet when I confider how widely the forementioned of his works is dispersed, and how few, in comparison, of its readers seem to have any true relish for the divine instructions therein given; it manifests the difference between reading the best books only as an exercife or a task, and feeding upon them with our spirit: And the same observation will hold with respect to such as read the spiritual Authors only with a critical eye; which is like going about to estimate the value of a diamond by moon-shine. I do from my heart pity such a depraved and wretched tafte, knowing that many an ingenious man does hereby lofe what might otherwise be of inestimable benefit to his foul: And let here be added as another confideration much to be lamented; that men of otherwife good dispositions, should so often subject themselves to the dominion of invincible prejudices against authors of allow'd piety, because of a different communion; not considering, that all the truly pious are of one communion and fellowship with God. Alas! that

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^{*} Mr. Payne before mentioned has lately published a good translation, as I am informed, of this piece.

fo many well-meaning persons should thus bribe judgment to bolt the door of charity against themselves. We censure the Roman Catholicks, and that with too much cause, for their uncharitableness; why then do we follow them in the worst part of their character? They are not all alike; and as there are many exceptions among them on the right, fo there are many among us on the wrong fide of charity; and too many on both fides to inflame differences betwixt us: But such writers are enemies to the peace of the Catholick Church of Christ, which flands not in agreement about opinions and forms (I wish I could say there was no higher difference betwixt us) but in unity of Spirit, and that charity which is the true bond of peace, and the warm heart's blood of Chriftianity. The preference that is to be given to one church above another, is on account of its greater excellence in training up its members in the fear of God and the faith of Christ: in that charity which edifieth [buildeth up] and to that worship which is in Spirit and in truth; and therefore it is that we give due preference to the Reformed Churches, and to our own in particular; but he that is already made perfect in the love of God and his neighbour, is got beyond all distinctions, and to the end of every church under heaven: Here all meet in the heart of Jesus Christ, and are partakers of his divine body and blood: They are one with Christ, and Christ is one with God.

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This divine charity is the great compass by which the Mystics steer; it is their very polestar; nay, their latitude and longitude and center too: Their employment and delight is love; their hearts and every pulse beat love; it is the element of their life; their fummum bonum, and their summum totum. Perhaps the very angels stretch not farther into the vast expanse of love than some of these have done; for they love with the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; and therefore they love all God's creatures in heaven and in earth: And as charity hopeth all things; fo as far as hope can go, they love; now hope can reach to the lowest pit of hell, and hope that Jesus Christ (whose love sure equals our hope) will in some remote age of eternity (by an omnipotent act of his love) cause mercy to triumph over judgment; reverse the sentence which strict justice hath passed on fallen men and fallen angels; give to them both power for repentance; add to their repentance faith; and to their faith charity; that so, blessed again with the renewal of the divine image, by the redeeming mercy of him whose power created them, they may rife from their beds of penal, long-enduring fire, to join the heavenly hoft, in praises to the eternal King, and to the Lamb of God; no longer peccable as before; but standing firm on the fure basis of never ceasing, ever grateful love. Amen.

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